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"THEM OLE' LOVE SONGS": THE BALLAD AND COUNTRY MUSIC TRADITION OF EARL SILVERS, FROM GREEN MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA

A Thesis

by

CASSIE MARTA ROBINSON

Submitted to Graduate School

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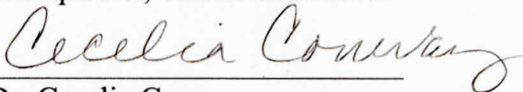

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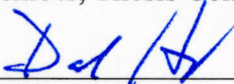

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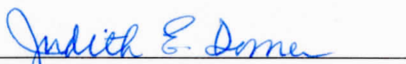

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ABSTRACT:

"THEM OLE' LOVE SONGS":
THE BALLAD AND COUNTRY MUSIC TRADITION
OF EARL SILVERS
FROM GREEN MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA. (May 2004)

Cassie Marta Robinson, B.A. Appalachian State University

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In this thesis the ballad and early country music singing traditions of Earl Silvers, from Green Mountain, North Carolina are examined. Silvers has never been a professional performer, and sings ballads, early country music hits, and folksongs to his grandchildren and family members. He comes from a legacy of mountain musicians. Earl's father, Tom Silvers, was born in 1881 and was a noted fiddle and banjo player in the Higgins community of Yancey County. Zora Higgins Silvers, Earl's mother, was a singer of old ballads and songs she learned from the radio and from her neighbors. Earl's parents, as well as the early country music broadcast from the radio into the mountains of western North Carolina helped Earl develop a passion for and connection to mountain music. Earl sings the songs his parents, family, and neighbors sang for him in his lifetime to his family, friends, and neighbors in the community of Green Mountain.

In this thesis I explore the influences and shaping of Earl's repertoire--his parents and their musical preferences, the radio, and local interests--to document the impact that

the transmission of musical traditions through the radio had on communities that also passed songs along through oral tradition. Earl's repertoire is a free-floating historical document that shows the interweaving of tradition and technological innovation, and depicts more of the transfer between older British Isle ballad traditions and new country music from radio shows in the late 1930s to 1950s. From the beginning, this thesis has been conducted in the hopes that a better academic explanation for this phenomenon would evolve and that simultaneously documentation of the tradition for the family and community of Earl Silvers would occur.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Earl Silvers was born on June 18th, 1936 in the Higgins community of Yancey County, North Carolina. He is the son of the late Tom[1] and Zorie Higgins Silvers, two very musically talented individuals from the mountains of western North Carolina. Tom Silvers was born in 1881, and was 55-years-old at the time of Earl's birth. Tom was from a wealth of instrumental traditions and was known to play both fiddle and banjo in the communities that he moved in and out of with his wife, Zorie, and their children. Zorie was much younger than Tom, yet she had the same passion for mountain music. She sang to her children regularly, recording ballads she learned from other people in her ballad book and often singing at community gatherings and around the house. Earl's Aunt Laurie Hensley was a community banjo player, who occasionally played with her husband Rex, and her brother Tom Silvers, Earl's father. Earl recalls the music he heard as a child fondly, and has made an effort to continue to sing some of the songs his parents taught him. Earl sings to his grandchildren, his nieces and nephews, and to himself as he works around his small farm in the head of a holler in Green Mountain, North Carolina.

In this thesis I concentrate on Earl and his musical performance. His repertoire includes both traditional ballads and songs he learned from both his parents, early commercial music recordings, and early radio shows broadcast from WWNC-Asheville and WNOX-Knoxville. From the early twentieth century collection of the 'love songs' of Appalachian people by ballad-enthusiasts such as Olive Dame Campbell, Maude

[1] See appendix B for a family tree of the Earl Silvers family, and the kinship ties of individuals mentioned in this thesis.

Karpeles, and Cecil Sharp, through the evolution of present-day occurrences of these traditions and musical communities, the balladry of western North Carolina has been an important area of field work and folklore research. From 1916 to 1918, just over the county line in the 'Laurel Country' of Madison County, British ballad enthusiast Cecil Sharp collected more ballads than in any other community in the Southern Appalachians.[2] This section of the Blue Ridge Mountains has been highly trafficked by an abundance of collectors of these old songs, reaching from 1910s to the present. From Olive Dame Campbell, Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles, to John Cohen, Michael Yates, and Allen Tullos (just to name a few collectors throughout the last century), western North Carolina, especially Madison, Buncombe, and Yancey Counties have been the ballad destination for the premiere ballad scholars of our time. With the early radio's heavy draw from the western North Carolina mountains in the early part of the twentieth century to the current popularization of early country, bluegrass, and religious music from the motion picture *O! Brother, Where Art Thou* and the romanticization of western North Carolina balladry in the Fine Arts film *Songcatcher,* the movie industry, the radio, and the ballad collectors of the twentieth century have contributed to drawing contemporary American society into the hillbilly music craze of the twenty-first century.

The first hillbilly music craze and the advent of early radio broadcasts of country music in the early 1920s helped propel rural Americans into developing traditional music for commercial purposes. The culmination of several regional traditions into the genres of pre-bluegrass and early country music redrew boundaries for the performance context of traditional ballads, folksongs, and instrument styles. Many of the ballad enthusiasts

[2] Cecil Sharp, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1932).

perceived these changes to be the downfall of traditional ballad repertoires. Maude Karpeles, aide to British ballad-scholar Cecil Sharp, claimed that "the region is no longer the folk-song collector's paradise, for the serpent, in the form of the radio, has crept in, bearing its insidious hill-billy and other 'pop' songs."[3]

Luckily, the anticipated devolution of the ballad traditions so venerated by Sharp and his colleagues did not entirely happen. Many songs have been lost in oral forms and the modern commercialized forms of music and transmission may have changed the traditional methods of transmission, performance and performer, as well as the context of the songs. Yet the tradition persists. Many have deemed Appalachia as having a dying culture, but it has not died; instead it serves as a model for continuity and change. The folk music revival, the emergence of professional traditional music forms such as bluegrass, and the increasing globalization of regional traditions have undeniably created a new context for Appalachian ballad traditions. Variants of ballads are no longer traceable by genealogy or the geographic method; the recordings of various performers, both modern day renditions and the field recordings of the 1930s to the present, have migrated into new regions and repertoires, creating a new context for the transmission of ballads and traditional musical forms.

The central counties of western North Carolina have hosted a multitude of commercially-recorded musicians. J.E. Mainer and his Mountaineers, from northern Buncombe County, Wiley and Jack Shelton from northern Madison County, Scotty and Lula Belle Wiseman from Avery County, The Callahan Brothers, Byard Ray, and Obray Ramsey, all from Madison County, and Oscar "Red" Wilson of Mitchell County, are just

[3]Maud Karpeles, *The Life and Work of Cecil Sharp.* (Chicago, Illinois: The University Press of Chicago, 1967), 171.

a few that were successful in commercial music. Della Norton, Cas and Virgie Wallin, Berzilla Wallin, Doug and Evelyn Ramsey, Dillard Chandler, Doug and Jack Wallin, Douston Ramsey, and Sheila Kay Adams are the well-known ballad singers from Madison County alone.

Central western North Carolina remains a wellspring of both instrumental and oral traditions of 'mountain music.' Madison County was the single most collected community in Sharp's research and was influential in the revival of southern mountain folk music. Madison County native Bascom Lamar Lunsford, the progenitor of the Mountain Song and Dance Festival held in Asheville, North Carolina since 1928, collected ballads from school children, organized a festival to promote and preserve mountain music, and recorded a multitude of western North Carolina songs for the Library of Congress.[4] Sodom Laurel, of Madison County, has gained national attention from folklorists and musical enthusiasts for the community's wealth of ballads. Yancey County, the adjoining county northwest of Madison, was quite similar both geographically and in patterns of settlement, but has been historically less recognized for its musical traditions.

Unlike the majority of Madison County's singers who both musically and genealogically share ancestor Roderick Shelton, many of the Yancey County singers have more ambiguous ancestry. Many Yancey County residents have spent time working with or living in Madison County communities, thus sharing repertoires and musical styles. One such example is Earl Silvers, who learned songs like "Barbara Allen" from his mother. Katherine Sutherland of Madison County taught many of her songs to Zorie.

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[4] Loyal Jones, "Mountain Dance and Folk Festival- A Living Tradition." *Along About Sundown 1928-2002.* (Asheville, NC: Asheville Folk Heritage Committee, 2002).

Many of the collectors who made their way into Madison ventured into Yancey as well, and the traditions bear a marked resemblance to one another.

However, the presence of these varied musical traditions and their reception in the early stages of commercial music and the Folk Music Revival has created a schism between folklorists/scholars who desire to document only the existence of unadulterated folk culture on the one hand, and those who acknowledge and study the evolution of the tradition as it is carried into more typical and intentional arenas. On the other hand, many folklorists struggle with these inevitable changes of context and performance, two key elements of the study of folklore. The question of validity of radio-influenced ballad traditions and the tangled threads of popular culture into traditional music genres of the southern Appalachians has generated a considerable amount of debate among scholars within the region.

The presence of old world ballad traditions intertwined with the versions shared with listeners to the radio demonstrates the importance that singing has in Appalachian culture. The continued performances of these songs, whether they were learned by the radio or more traditional forms of transmission by family or community members, suggests that even in contemporary Appalachia, balladry still plays an important role in Appalachian folk music tradition. Once the means of transmitting and broadcasting the community's social norms and values, the tradition of ballad singing became antiquated with the advent of radio technology; a new medium for the transmission of social norms took precedence over the singing of ballads to tell stories and affirm the community's social values. Singing of ballads today, for the majority of singers, is associated with

perpetuation of a "living" cultural tradition, celebrating mountain musical genres and performance.

The advent of early radio brought new voices into rural southern Appalachia and elsewhere, rearranging transmission methods, but also provided access to ballad and folk song repertoires from different areas within the region. Early radio jumbled up the foundations of transmission (as it had existed for generations before the radio) adhered to by academics and enthusiasts, and extended the realm of a broad category of "mountain music," in contrast to local western North Carolina music traditions or West Virginia music traditions, for example. Radio also provided new songs for absorption into local repertoires, often encouraged and embraced by the performer, but frowned upon by traditional purists such as Maud Karpeles.

There is something to be said about the influence that early country had on local traditions. In western North Carolina, songs like "The Drunken Driver," most notably performed by Molly O'Day and the Cumberland Mountain Folks, had a tremendous impact on traditional ballad singers. On the John Cohen recording "End of an Old Song,"[5] Dillard Chandler, a notable Madison County ballad singer, performed the then-contemporary ballad "The Drunken Driver," right alongside the old ballad of the British Isles, "The Carolina Lady," a Child Ballad often known as "The Lady of Carlisle." Earl Silvers sings "The Drunken Driver" as well as "Keemo Kimo," a song popular among nineteenth century African Americans. There is little discrepancy between the performance of these two songs, and the inclusion of both in the repertoire suggests a fusion between commercial and ethnic traditions, and a healthy blend of "something old,

[5]John Cohen, *Dillard Chandler: End of an Old Song*. Folkways Records No. 2418, 1970, lp. (also see liner notes by Balsam, Robert.)

something new." Native American ballads and the ballad documentation of gruesome killings and horrific accidents were focused on specific times and events, and were popular in American culture.[6] The method of preserving stories and legends gained an American twist with the flavor for gruesome and horrific; they also were easily modifiable into catchy tunes with musical accompaniment by the addition of a chorus or refrain. Native American ballads like "The Wreck of the Old Ninety-Seven" or "Little Omie Wise" also made an impact on many mountain communities that were reached by the radio, as is evident by the numerous variants of that song collected by musicologists in search of old ballads of antiquity, suggesting a shared space within the blanket term "mountain music."

A more interdisciplinary look to the classical scholarship of ballad traditions in southern Appalachia embraces a folkloristic approach, and claims that the performance and context of the event (in this case, ballad singing) is crucial to the event itself. The impact of technological innovations on the entirety of Appalachia is vast and especially significant to ballad traditions. The victorious survival of ballad traditions comes not only from the number of variants still performed in traditional circles, but also from the changes in context, performance, and etic/emic qualities that have contributed to the survival of the ballad. Regardless of the transmission method, the inclusion of the songs into modern traditions suggests that these songs are influential and integral within the identity of mountain music. Sharp and his colleagues foresaw eminent death for the

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[6]George Malcom Laws Jr, *Native American Balladry: A Descriptive Study and a Bibliographical Syllabus* (Philadelphia, PA: The American Folklore Society, 1957).

ballad traditions of the British Isles in their lifetime.[7] However, ballads are still being sung in local traditions; Melanie Rice, of Sodom, North Carolina, is an eighth generation ballad singer singing songs sung by her great-aunt, Mary Sands, that were collected by Cecil Sharp. Both scholarship and popular publication continues to explore these "remnants" of folk culture. Books like *Sodom Laurel Album* are being published in 2002[8]; the film *Songcatcher* hit Fine Arts Theaters by storm in 2000.[9] The current explosion of mass interest in American roots music is in part attributed to the popular film *O! Brother Where Art Thou,*[10] but an appeal to an audience is vital for these current venues to be so well received. These ballads did not originate in Appalachia, and Appalachia should not be perceived as the vault that holds them, even if it remains the best American resource for them. The popular forms of documentation and transmission have created new ways to pass along these songs; in an increasingly homogeneous American society, even five hundred year old ballads have found nooks and crannies to re-assimilate.

Appalachia is often perceived to be on the fringe of American culture, a place to extract both natural resources and culture. But the songs are not stolen. The songs live on, thanks to both recordings and oral traditions in the region. Biologists celebrate the mutations, evolution and struggles an organism undergoes to find its niche and persist, and yet it seems that many ballad scholars have neglected a dynamic approach to the academic study of the ballad. Songs like "Barbara Allen" have remained in the mountains

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[7] Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 170.

[8]Rob Amberg, *Sodom Laurel Album.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002)

[9] *Songcatcher.* Prod. and dir. Maggie Greenwald, 134 min., Songcatcher Films, LLC. 2000. videocassette.

[10] *O! Brother, Where Art Thou.* Prod. and dir. The Cohen Brothers. Touchstone Video, 2001. videocassette.

through an entire century of technological advancements, and likely will continue to exist another century more. Undoubtedly, technology is not neutral, nor is it often favorable to preserving traditional art and cultural forms. However, it is important to credit the continued performance and inclusion in various repertoires of Appalachian and British Isle ballads, despite the mass influence that technology has had on musical traditions.

It is important to note that the preservation and documentation of ballads through commercial and folklore-based recordings have heavily influenced more homogeneous musical performance and lyric choices, thus changing the delivery and the cultural value of the song. The homogenization of these songs into more uniform versions does change the context of the performance. Some might argue that the song is no longer the same, with such a widespread impact on so many repertoires. However, it is through the study of the changes in transmission of these ballads combined with the communities that value them, that much can be learned about twenty-first century Appalachia and the notion of 'folk.' The value placed on these singing traditions in both Madison and Yancey County suggests a strong existing link to what some perceive to be 'folk culture,' but also forces rigid definitions of transmission and validity to be reevaluated. Performers are still embracing the songs of a collective Appalachian past, creating bonds across the many different Appalachian communities. This absorption of radio-delivered repertoires often creates a problem for the academics, but rarely for the performer. It becomes difficult to trace the origins of the songs and their transmission when the radio disseminates one version of a previously known variant of a ballad or tune and replaces the existing "folk" versions within a community. This dilemma creates yet another etic/emic conflict with understanding the validity of the performance. By treating radio and commercially

affected transmission as having a valid position in the genre of Appalachian balladry, the importance of both the contemporary influences and the inclusion of traditional songs and tunes into one repertoire become more evident. With a variety of song choices introduced by the radio into a performer's repertoire, the inclusion of both old world ballads and early country music reflects even more of the importance of these songs.

A close look at the repertoire of Earl Silvers, of Green Mountain, North Carolina, exposes a combination of both newer songs influenced by the radio and several older ballads from his childhood, both sung in an earlier ballad style of ornamentation and alternative melodic structure. His idiolect is embedded with "yanders" and "summairs" and various forms of constrained vocal inflection. In many instances, country music and religious music transmitted from the radio cycled itself back into local repertoires like that of Earl's family, affirming cultural connections despite the different geographic boundaries of the performer and their audiences. The availability of commercial recordings and various genres of music on the radio created a vast library of songs for individuals to learn and perform. Early radio favorites such as the Carter Family, Jimmy Rodgers, and Molly O'Day shaped the repertoires of both the singing layman and of the upcoming bluegrass stars such as the Stanley Brothers and Bill Monroe.

The importance of radio and commercial music should not be ignored in the study of contemporary traditional performers. To portray Appalachia only as a region of frozen tradition and rigid ancestral musical legacies is a harsh misconception of the cultural dynamism underway in twentieth century Appalachia. The inclusion of these songs in the performance and function of such traditions suggests 1) change and 2) selective inclusion, and 3) resistance to the popular culture, yielding a form for traditional ballads

to remain within America's growing mainstream society. The celebration of the ballad in recent books, movies, and research; the intentional preservation of these traditions by people who see the importance of passing traditions and enjoy the art of ballad singing; the inclusion of balladry in the lineups of mountain musical festivals and heritage festivals in the area and the survival of the ballad in these two counties of western North Carolina all give reason to document the growth and change in these traditions so that ballad-singing in these areas is acknowledged as a viable and healthy tradition, despite mainstream America's demand for homogenization.

Earl's home in Green Mountain sits within Yancey County of western North Carolina. In 2000, Yancey County had a population of 17,774.[11] Yancey County is primarily a rural county with pockets of industry, to date, that has closed in recent years, or is facing the threat of closing. From Burnsville, the county seat, it is about 45 minutes to Asheville, which is the largest city in western North Carolina.

Though Yancey County is primarily rural and similar in makeup to many other southern Appalachian areas, there has been a surprising amount of ethnographic research conducted in the area. George L. Hicks, author of *Appalachian Valley* and *Experimental Americans: Celo and Utopian Community in the Twentieth Century,* John B. Stephenson, author of *Shiloh: A Mountain Community,* and Patricia D. Beaver, author of *Rural Community in the Appalachian South,* have all contributed to a growing canon of research materials and ethnographic research. These sources all give an academic interpretation of the people of some parts of Yancey County, but the materials have never

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[11]2000 United States Census, Yancey County, North Carolina statistics. http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsTable?_lang=en&_vt_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1&_geo_id=05000US37199

truly been adopted by many community members as having told "their" story, and have made little impact on people of the county. These books, though they provide insight to both academic interpretation of rural in mountain communities the 1970s, did not directly relate to the research I have conducted for my thesis.

Chapter two will detail the cultural context of ballad traditions in Appalachia, as well as the impact that ballad collecting had on mountain culture. The singing traditions of Earl Silvers mentioned throughout this thesis can be related to the greater context of singing traditions in western North Carolina and the southern Appalachian mountains This next chapter will talk about commercial contributions to repertoires such as Earl's, as well as events going on in Appalachia that would affect the repertoires of singers like Earl.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Appalachia has long served the need of mainstream America to provide a generic diary of the history of early American frontier life, a mythical ideal to which Americans often return to justify their modern conveniences and their departure from farm labor and eco-connectiveness. Appalachia also exists as a tourist destination that serves a reminder of the collective pioneer past.[12] Ballad traditions, an important cultural element of western European ancestry, are just one of these reminders embedded in a collective memory that have served as both a romanticized reminiscence of the past and a concrete measure of the influence on evolving trends in mountain music. Early country and bluegrass music are connected to these songs and stories of life since past and both fabricated and factually documented the ever-changing story of musical and cultural Appalachia. Bluegrass music, in its classic form, is an evolution and innovation of these traditions, reincorporating them into the fabric of mountain music, and providing a way for the songs and the tradition to live on in new forms, reintroduced as creative and skilled musicianship. Folklorist Archie Green mentions this concept in *Only A Miner,* suggesting "individual recorded songs entered tradition and became 'folksongs' in much the same manner as did broadsides."[13] The relationship that ballad and a cappella singing traditions have with early country and bluegrass is a culturally political complex and

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[12]Michael G. Kammen, *The Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

[13] Archie Green, *Only A Miner.* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 447.

intricate story, involving a world of Appalachian cultures and their interactions with the rest of American ideals.

Migration Patterns

The series of migrations of people from the British Isles and western Europe to America forever left their mark upon the Appalachian landscape. The English, Irish, Scottish, Scots-Irish, Welsh, and Germanic peoples who settled in the area brought their own cultural forms of agriculture, religion, architecture, and musical traditions to the region. The later arrival of African-Americans, Italians and eastern Europeans, many of whom came to join the labor forces for the extraction of resources and agricultural maintenance, also helped shape and influence the forms of Appalachian musical traditions.[14]

Ballad Traditions

One of the major influences on the evolution of Appalachian music was the ballad. "Barbara Allen," America's most well known Child Ballad, dates back at least to the 1660's, and has been collected all across America.[15] "The House Carpenter" is another ballad that dates back to the late 1600's, collected in broadside form by Samuel Pepys.[16] Ballads served as oral (and sometimes written) documents of culture and history of the British Isles; many ballads were shaped around sentiment concerning political events, guised into a "folk code," such as the children's song, "Froggy Went A

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[14]Gordon McKinney, "Economy and Community in Western North Carolina, 1860-1865." *In Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century, ed.* M. Pudup, D. Billings, A. Waller, 163-184. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[15] James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*. (New York, New York: Double Day Printing. 1977).

[16]Herbert Shellans, *Folk Songs of the Blue Ridge Mountains.* (New York, New York: Oak Publications, 1968), 31.

Courtin'."[17] Lords and Ladies, damsels and knights, dragons, and even mermaids were popular characters in British Isle ballads--some documenting an event, others creating a lyrical fiction entertaining and enriching the lives of hard laboring people. A mixture between fantasy and fairy tale and the documentation of peasant life created a rich oral repertoire of balladry from the British Isles that would persist as a regional repertoire in the southern Appalachians and beyond for more than a hundred years longer than in England, until the advent of the phonograph and the radio.

Many of the Southern Appalachian songs collected by Cecil Sharp between 1916 and 1918 had historical references in their titles, such as "The Death of Queen Jane" or biblical titles, such as "Christ Was Born in Bethlehem," "Daniel in the Lion's Den," "Lazarus," "The Ten Commandments," and "When Adam Was Created." Songs arrived in repertoires out of folk legend, fantasy, religious teachings, and historical events. Though this form of documentation through song is often more associated with native American Balladry, ballads are rooted in the documentation of events, whether actual or imaginary.[18]

The native American ballad tradition, which evolved out of the Old World songs, tells more definite stories, many of which can be traced back to actual events such as murders, train wrecks, and horrific disasters.[19] This tradition heavily affected bluegrass repertoires; one example is the Flatt and Scruggs recording of "The Wreck of the Old

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[17] Patricia Campbell Shehan, *Songs in Their Heads: Music and Its Meaning in Children's Lives.* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[18] Jan Harold Brunvand, "Anglo-American Ballads." *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia.*(New York, New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 57.

[19] William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945.* (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1999)

97."[20] The tradition continues to the present day bluegrass world with accompanied ballads for current events, with bluegrass legends Tony and Larry Rice playing songs like "The Mystery That Won't Go Away;"[21] the story of the Colorado murder of the child beauty queen Jonbenet Ramsey.

Easier to pack in a boat or a wagon than a fiddle or set of pipes, the human voice has always been the most accessible form of entertainment and preservation. It was much easier for music to be transmitted through song, as often the hands of the performer would be employed in various manual tasks, which greatly limited the use of hands for instrument playing. Vocal music kept workers entertained and helped keep a steady rhythm for monotonous chores. Fiddle music, as well as lap dulcimer traditions, were prevalent in southern mountain communities prior to the arrival of the banjo, the Stringband era, and early radio, but instrument playing was a leisure-time musical event, and served different purposes, than the performance of the ballad.[22] Though the banjo is documented just before 1800, the Antebellum households with slaves, the post-civil war migration of African Americans to Appalachia, the railroad industry, and the lumberyards brought forth more occasions for the transmission of banjo music to mountain whites than the times before extractive industry. Thus began the fusion of fiddle and banjo music.[23]

Though some scholars interpret Appalachia as an isolated region, the historical presence of ballad traditions interspersed through a large spectrum of families among

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[20] *Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs: Hard Travelin' Featuring the Ballad of Jed Clampett.* Columbia, LP 8751, 1963.

[21] *Rice, Rice, Hillman, and Peterson: Running Wild.* "The Mystery That Won't Go Away." Rounder 116, 2001.

[22] Gerald Milnes, *Play of a Fiddle: Traditional Music, Dance, and Folklore of West Virginia.* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999)

[23] Cecelia Conway, *African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia: A Study of Folk Traditions.* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995)

various geographical locations with an unknown method of transmission suggests 1) overall continuity within ballad transmission and various existing traditions, and 2) discounting the isolation myth by showing the exchange of the songs through a performer travels. For example, Lloyd Chandler of Madison County, North Carolina, has recently been identified as a likely source for “O Death,” a currently popular song recorded by Ralph Stanley and many other musicians in the last 80 years, made popular by *O! Brother Where Art Thou.* Researchers at the Library of Congress and the Folklore Department at UNC-Chapel Hill, and the community and family members of Lloyd Chandler have sought to validate that Chandler is the author, and should be granted a posthumous copyright to “O Death.” Chandler was a preacher whose sermons were heard in various congregations in mountain churches of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Chandler traveled widely, preaching and singing his “song” as his testimony of his relationship with his God.[24] Chandler sang this song all over the southeastern mountains. His “song” was incorporated into traditional repertoires, joining a long line of many unidentifiable songs collectively seen as “traditional” or just as “mountain music.” Obviously, remote Madison County was not completely isolated from other mountain communities.

Some observers use the term “isolation” to describe Southern Appalachia because there were fewer economic centers and transportation routes in Appalachia. However, “isolation” suggests that people did not travel, but remained in one location, and lived in a stagnant culture. Yet people did leave and travel within and out of the mountains for a multitude of reasons. Travel between communities like that of Lloyd Chandler,

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[24] Carl Lindahl, “Legends and Lyrics of Lloyd Chandler’s Conversation with Death.” Unpublished paper, 2003 American Folklore Society Annual Meeting, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

outmigration to urban centers, and extensive market systems have all played a role in keeping Appalachia from being isolated.

While Appalachia, as a region, was never isolated, various pockets and smaller communities within Appalachia faced a "relative isolation." Individual or family groups within particular communities of Appalachia were certainly isolated, just as elsewhere within the United States, depending on various economic factors and geographic barriers. It is inaccurate to portray entire communities as being isolated, regardless of the various time periods of history, for there were always people going to market, leaving for various forms of work, or traveling for social reasons such as preaching or visiting family members. In *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War,* Paludan states that:

> even in the 1850s and 1860s the mountaineers of the Shelton Laurel Region [of Madison County] were not totally isolated in a physical sense. Although their farms supplied most of their needs, they did have to leave the valley for salt, and from time to time they might go to the nearest village store to barter for manufactured goods.[25]

The Buncombe Turnpike was a well-traveled market route in the western North Carolina mountains. The road opened in 1828, and ran through Madison County. Governor Zebulon Baird Vance's father ran a stand on the Buncombe Turnpike, feeding 90,000 hogs in one month in the 1830s.[26]

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[25] Phillip Shaw Paludan, *Victims: A True Story of the Civil War.* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 9.

[26] Manly Wade Wellman, *The Kingdom of Madison.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1973.

In his youth, Earl Silver's family traveled about the western North Carolina mountains, following jobs with Champion Fiber Company.[27] Before Earl was born, Tom (Earl's father) traveled by horse and buggy to eastern Kentucky to work in the coalmines. Tom and his brother-in-law, Rex Hensley, traveled together, working in various locations. Earl's cousin, Ernest Silvers (who is married to Earl's wife's sister, Shirley) left Higgins in the early 1930s to go work in the CCC camps in Franklin, North Carolina, as well as Oregon. In *Dorie, Woman of the Mountains,*[28] Dorie's family moves around eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina to work in the lumber camps, much like Earl's family. Earl lived in a multitude of locations in his childhood, and interacted within various communities. Though some of the locations in which he lived could be perceived as "isolated" because of their rugged terrain and geographic remote location, Earl still managed to go to a variety of schools and participate in community events wherever he was living.

Carl Lindahl, Glenn Hinson, and other researchers have been trying to determine whether or not Lloyd Chandler was the author of the popular "O' Death," and with charts, diagrams, and statistics, they demonstrated Chandler's high traffic within various mountain communities and the emergence of variants recorded near the places of Chandler's travels. "O' Death" is only one song that has been documented as having authorship hidden within the label "traditional." But perhaps more importantly, this story provides a case in point that the mountains are not as isolated as some argue. In fact, there was so much heavy traffic and interplay between residents that it is illogical to suggest isolation.

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[27] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, April 21, 2002.

[28] Florence Cope Bush. *Dorie Woman of the Mountains.*(Sevierville, TN: Nandel Publishing, 1988).

The historic geographic method of folklore analysis may serve as a honing device for tracing the many connections of ballads, within this musically dynamic region. Lloyd Chandler's "O' Death" is one example of the cultural crossroads Appalachia served. Inter-regional travel did not begin with Chandler; intricate market systems, traveling peddlers and preachers, the civil war and other military ventures, the railroad, and labor-based migratory patterns all helped transmit ballads around the region prior to the introduction of the phonograph and later, the radio.

The high lonesome sound, which is often equated with bluegrass and mountain music, grew out of mountain a cappella singing of ballads and religious songs. While settling the southern mountains in the early nineteenth century, women were required to work in the home and had tedious labor requirements such as spinning, carding wool, cooking, and working outside in the family's infield gardens; women were often employing their children to help with the even more tedious tasks than those that were required women's work. Often, women would sing "old love songs" to entertain the children while they worked, as well as to overcome the drudgery of everyday chores. Young boys only worked with their mother until their father could use them in the fields, unlike the close work shared by mother and daughter until the daughter left home. This added several more years of daily hearing and learning ballads for females, providing a more extensive repertoire in matrilineal lines.[29]

However, it cannot be overlooked that various ballad collectors recorded from numerous male ballad singers. Men often knew these tunes as well as women, but the male performance context was quite different. A male-dominated world of trading routes

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[29] Susan Eaker, *Women, Banjos, and Ballads: Gender and the History of Appalachian Music.* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2000)

and market systems created a venue for men to interact with other men. The industrial labor force explosion in the late 1800s[30] also created a new venue for men to intermingle with men from other communities, while working in timber, coal, and smaller extraction enterprises. Labor camps united musicians and their traditions more than ever before, both creating a venue to introduce new songs and variants into new repertoires and providing opportunities for musicians to play dances within (and outside) homes of the community. Women often could, and did, play instruments, but social traditions of women performers and the requirements of women's work seem to have stifled the development of more women fiddle and banjo players.[31] Until the 1960s, women often stayed home with the babies while the men took the older children to a neighborhood dance.

The Home Missions Movement and Mountain Workers

The Home Missions movement in the mountains created yet another change for local mountain musical traditions and ballad singing with the introduction of middle class women from the northern United States into rural mountain communities. A great number of "mountain workers," as many were called, came into rural western North Carolina and greater southern Appalachia in the early part of the twentieth century. Many of the mountain workers had been exposed to the stereotyped mountaineer identity made popular by various local color writers of the 1870s and 1880s. Between a national call for a "Christian America" movement and the increasing publications about "a strange and

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[30] Michael G. Kammen, Michael G. *The Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture.* (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1993)

[31] lecture notes, Dr. Cecelia Conway, Spring 2002.

peculiar peoples,"[32] religious minded people flocked to the Appalachian Mountains to bring mountain people up to their mainstream religious standards.[33] Not limited to the Presbyterian Church, the region was visited by many religious-minded men and women trying to socially impact the southern mountains during various time periods in the first half of the twentieth century—ranging from the Salvation Army's "Hallelujah Lassies,"[34] the Seventh Day Adventists and Roman Catholics. The Presbyterian Mission Board was the predominate religious presence in the southern mountains, but a variety of denominations, some even lacking official church affiliation, had come to work in the region. These workers had enough of a presence in the southern mountains that John C. Campbell organized The Conference of Southern Mountain Workers in 1912.

The Conference of Southern Mountain Workers was created to foster community among religious-minded missionaries and social workers, so that one byproduct of this organization was an extensive network of community workers and mission schools. This network of organizations was closely connected to the creation of craft cooperatives, folk schools, and settlement schools, and was later instrumental in the collection of ballads and folksong by collectors like Maud Karpeles and Cecil Sharp.[35] Olive Dame Campbell, wife of John C. Campbell, founder of the Conference of Southern Mountain Workers, had joined her husband as they journeyed in the southern mountains working on the survey of Appalachia, sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation. On one of these trips,

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[32] Henry Shapiro, *Appalachia On Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of Chapel Hill Press, 1978)

[33] David Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of Chapel Hill Press, 1986).

[34] Penny Messinger, *'The Hope of a Sound Rural Life': Female Reformers and the Cooperative Movement in the Appalachian South, 1912-1950.* [unpublished paper, given at the 12th Berkshire Conference].

[35] David Whisnant, *All That is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region.* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 80.

Mrs. Campbell first heard a version of "Barbara Allen" sung by a child at Hindman Settlement School. She quickly began to collect these ballads and folksongs, documenting a total of almost eighty before contacting Cecil Sharp, world-renowned scholar of English cultures of antiquity.[36] Through the Council of the Southern Mountains, Olive Dame Campbell had access to the mountain workers who had created and labored in developing schools in the Appalachian mountains to educate and "acculturate" mountain people into more urban middle-class ways.[37] These workers also created an early twentieth century database for identifying various cultural traditions in the many different community mission schools, thus encouraging the visits of ballad collectors like Sharp and Karpeles, Dorothy Scarborough,[38] and Olive Dame Campbell, and mountain handicraft enthusiasts like Allen Eaton.[39]

The Handicrafts Movement

The extent to which the Home Missions Movement changed the culture of southern Appalachia is the subject of debate. The movement helped establish the Handicrafts Movement in Southern Appalachia, much of which is documented in Allen Eaton's *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands.*[40] The presentation of craft school-taught hand skills as authentic Appalachian Handicrafts is another "Local Color Movement" in American fiction.[41] By persuading mountaineers to remain in the region in a time of great

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[36] Maud Karpeles, *The Life and Work of Cecil Sharp.* (Chicago, Illinois: The University Press of Chicago, 1967), 141-142.

[37] David Whisnant, *All That is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region.* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

[38] Dorothy Scarborough, *A Song Catcher in the Southern Mountains,* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1937).

[39] Allen H. Eaton, *The Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands,* (New York, New York: The Russell Sage Foundation. 1937).

[40] ibid.

[41] Charles Alan Watkins, "Weaving Day at Penland: A Photographic Analysis," *National Women's Studies Association Journal.* Vol. II, no.3, (1999): 18-23.

out-migration, with both the promise of cultural and economic revitalization and employment, middle class urban America reaped the benefits; the urbanites were able to purchase "authentic mountain handicrafts," such as the hooked rugs of western North Carolina, or various woodcarvings, or quilts. Though a great number of Appalachian people began migrating out of the region in the latter half of the second decade of the twentieth century to go work in the automobile industry, as well as other industries such as coal, steel, iron, and road building in the northeastern part of the United States and abroad, the handicraft movement was intended to provide wages and employment for Appalachian individuals around these settlement schools as an alternative to avoid leaving their mountainous homeland. The craft revivals and ballad collecting were going on in a time of great cultural upheaval in Appalachia, as in western North Carolina.[42] Eaton sums up the general assumptions of many of the Mountain Workers, asking his readers the question,

> Is it not interesting to find in this mountain area some of the baskets, chairs, and other handicraft forms, which have disappeared entirely in European homelands, just as research has revealed ballads and folk music, which our fore bearers brought across the sea, that have been saved to the race through the prolonged isolation of the Southern Highlands?[43]

The "prolonged isolation of the Southern Highlands" is Eaton's explanation for the persistence of cultural traditions in the mountains. Yet Eaton ignores the impact that the

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[42] Jane Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998)

[43] Allen H. Eaton, *The Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands,* (New York, New York: The Russell Sage Foundation. 1937)

mountain workers had in constructing and marketing mountain culture. Perhaps Eaton adopted this attitude from Berea College's President William Frost, who had first applied the phrase "contemporary ancestors" to Appalachian people in 1899. Frost, Eaton, various southern mountain benevolent workers, and Olive Dame Campbell felt it was their "spiritual duty" to minister for the people of Appalachia, and all seemed to share the same sort of "mission" to help the mountaineer by raising funds outside the region and capitalizing on their cultural differences, as "contemporary ancestors." Olive Dame Campbell had said,

> I hoped that through the ballads, attention might be drawn to the mountain situation in such a way as to help the mountain people. One cannot help these people by exploiting their weaknesses and peculiarities...[44]

But the very nature of the emphasis on Appalachian anomalies, regardless of their intent for celebration or exaggeration, helped further paint the picture of an "otherness" about the people of Appalachia.[45]

It was not just social and religious-minded workers that were meddling, no matter how well intended, with the people of the southern mountains. American social icon Henry Ford was pumping money into the creation of mountain fiddler's conventions, almost quicker than America could pump fuel into their new Ford Model-T's. Ford was in the same camp as Cecil Sharp, regarding the mountain people as bearers of a strong Anglo-Saxon stock. Sharp collected the songs to preserve them on paper, and Ford

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[44] David Whisnant, *All That is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region.* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 114.

[45] Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia On Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978)

encouraged the "old American values" of the Appalachians financially, with high hopes that "old-time fiddle music [would be] an antidote to the jazz music and 'loose morals' that were sweeping the country."[46] Despite Ford's intentions, Charles Wolfe, author of *Tennessee Strings: the Story of Country Music in Tennessee,* observes that "the atmosphere created by Ford's sponsorship helped the cause of country music immensely by making it much more acceptable to radio stations and record companies."[47]

The Phonograph, Cylinders, and The Radio

The phonograph, though introduced to the United States as early as the 1890's, failed to adequately document and circulate the music of the South, including Appalachia. Recording devices were too cumbersome to carry into rugged and remote areas, and were quite expensive. Even during Sharp's collecting, from 1916 to 1918, the only documentation was the musical notation and lyrics because of the unsuitability of the available marketing devices. By 1897, the Columbia Eagle graphophone, the Edison Gem Cylinder, and the Berliner improved gramophone had created a market for recorded music and the sale of classical music and Tin-Pan Alley tunes (sheet music, circulated much like broadside ballads--the first American "pop music").[48]Contrary to the exaggerated myth of Appalachian isolation, the mountains were the setting for a cultural crossroads in which some urban popular music such as Tin Pan Alley songs were incorporated in many mountain repertoires right alongside the old world ballads and fiddle tunes carried over in the late 1700s and early 1800s. According to country music historian Bill C. Malone, rural people "bought the cylinder records in rather large

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[46] Charles Wolfe, *Tennessee Strings: The Story of Country Music in Tennessee.*(Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977) 56.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

quantities, but they had to be content with the same musical offerings that were being disseminated among city people."[49] Just like the missions and handicrafts movements, the phonograph and cylinder recordings were both outside influences and links to the world outside for the people of Appalachia.

The significance of the phonograph and cylinder era is that many mountain people specifically sought out the purchase of the phonograph and cylinder recordings to expand their musical horizons. Initially, the availability of recordings had a large impact on the listening audiences in Appalachia. The introduction of commercial radio not only threatened the profits of the phonograph and cylinder recordings, but it also threatened ballad traditions of the Southern Appalachians. Maud Karpeles summed up her feelings on the coming of the radio by stating that:

> In most cases, our former singers and their children had allowed the songs to recede into the background of their memories, replacing them by those they hear on the radio. They feel they have got to keep up with the times, yet they all agreed that the old songs are better than the new ones and it needed but little encouragement for them to start searching their memories for them.[50]

The intrusion of the radio into the balladry garden of Eden was, according to Maud Karpeles, much like the "Fall of Man." Karpeles, like other collectors of her time, envisioned the Appalachian people as a temporal Adam and Eve, claiming that:

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[49] Bill C. Malone, *Country Music U.S.A: A Fifty Year History.* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press. 1968) 30.

[50] Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work,* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1967) 171.

Appalachian Room
Appalachian State University Library
Boone ... olina

> The region is no longer the folk-song collector's paradise, for the serpent, in the form of the radio, has crept in, bearing its insidious hill-billy and other 'pop' songs.[51]

However, many of the people of the region welcomed the radio, and according to Bill C. Malone, "the period of the 1920s and 1930s has been described as the 'Golden Age of Hillbilly Music.'"[52] The phonograph and its similar competitors had been greeted into the region, and many of the popular songs of the American teens and twenties had already begun to make their way into the repertoire. Yet, as Wolfe points out in *Tennessee Strings,* even after Karpeles returned in 1951 to record once again in Southern Appalachia, she was "able to record over ninety songs, 'traditional' enough even to suit her standards." Wolfe goes further to suggest that "the fact that these older songs existed side by side with the newer hillbilly styles might have suggested to Maud Karpeles that she was dealing with one type of music, not two."[53]

Henry Ford's involvement in the development of Fiddler's Conventions played a major, though indirect, role in the acceptance of hillbilly radio. Though Ford promoted stringband music and did not specifically endorse balladry and early banjo picking, the support of those like Henry Ford promoted mountain music to American audiences. Hillbilly music was piped into the more affluent American homes and mountain shacks alike in the early part of the 1900s. As Appalachian people migrated into the larger urban areas, they brought with them cultural traditions and practices, as well as their musical

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[51] Maud Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work,* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1967) 170.

[52] Bill C. Malone, *Country Music U.S.A: A Fifty Year History.* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1968), 45.

[53] Charles Wolfe, *Tennessee Strings: The Story of Country Music in Tennessee,* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977) 11.

tastes. This brought the mountaineer a little too close to mainstream Americans for comfort, because of the contemptuous stereotypes leftover from the Local Color Literary Movement. Though the First World War had intermingled Appalachian soldiers with those from the homes of the cultural majority of America, and Appalachian people were beginning to move to the larger cities to seek employment and respite from the hard work on hardscrabble farms, and though mission dollars of many people were going into Appalachia through the Christian churches, the only way that mainstream America could accept hillbilly music was that if the Appalachian people were marketed as an "other," a group of hayseed rubes whose purpose was entertaining popular audiences. Early film had already sold rural mountain individuals as a threat to mainstream society, with the 1915 film *Billie-The Hill Billy.*[54]

Jerry Williamson points out in his book, *Hillbilly Land: What the Movies Did to the Mountains and What The Mountains Did to the Movies,* that the hillbilly music arena was different than hillbilly films; the music and films of the time period created a realm for the hillbilly to exist, separate from the mainstream. It is important to note that both the movie industry and the radio stations that both aired and broadcast mountain music were not often owned by mountain people, but by successful businessmen from the more urban areas of the east coast.

But the hillbilly image and persona were often well received in rural America. For some people, it was a stark contrast with the glitter and gold of the urban American "Roaring Twenties," which was often deemed by the more conservative and religious people as being sinful and hedonistic. Hillbilly music preexisted radio and records, and

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[54] Jerry Williamson, *Hillbilly Land: What The Movies Did to the Mountains and the Mountains Did to the Movies,* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995) 37.

was a vibrant and changing repertoire, with influences like minstrelsy and Tin Pan Alley, as well as older Celtic, African and European contributions as well. Wolfe's notion that ballads, instrumental mountain music and commercial hillbilly music were one in the same is supported by the overwhelming reception given to hillbilly broadcasts. The hillbilly musical genre did not include many ballads and gospel songs, but it did include a few songs that were left over from minstrelsy, though it was mostly Stringband and Tin Pan Alley music that was available on record and radio. Hillbilly was not a tight genre. According to D.K. Wilgus,

> the instruments used were either cast-offs from urban culture or were played in an unorthodox non-urban fashion… instruments were chosen that were available, portable, inexpensive, and relatively easy to adapt to traditional melodies and to each other.[55]

The commercial markets of hillbilly music were more concerned with the image of the musicians, and less with the type of music performed. While researchers and academics have delineated the specific forms of music that together compromise the hillbilly music genre, listeners have enjoyed a variety of types of music within the genre. Mail order catalogs provided new instruments to incorporate into the performance of mountain music, and the incorporation of mandolins, guitars, and various novelty instruments created a new sound for old tunes.

Ballads Meet Country Music and Early Bluegrass Musicians

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[55] D.K. Wilgus, "Country-Western Music and the Urban Hillbilly." (*Journal of American Folklore.* Vol. 83, Number 328, April-June, 1970), 163.

The mountainous areas of western North Carolina, eastern Kentucky, and eastern Tennessee were all part of the Appalachia where Sharp collected ballads. The same Appalachia generated musicians who were precursors to bluegrass, such as the Callahan Brothers, Wade Mainer's Mountaineers, Molly O'Day with Lynn Davis and the Cumberland Mountain Folks, as well as bluegrass musicians such as The Stanley Brothers and Jimmy Martin. It is important to note that many of these musicians did not identify themselves as "bluegrass musicians," but often saw themselves as playing "country" music. The genre called "bluegrass" evolved out the musical contributions that the Monroe Brothers made to the country music scene. The Kentucky mountain fringe, better known as "the bluegrass," yielded "the father of Bluegrass," Bill Monroe. All these individuals were in or near communities that shared ballad traditions. Yet ballad traditions were also discovered in coastal areas of the south, sprinkled along the northeast, and in California, Texas, and other western states, demonstrating that Appalachia was not the sole bearer of this tradition, but more of a crossroads of American musical exchange as well as a depository.

The Callahan Brothers

The Callahan Brothers, known to people in their community of Laurel, North Carolina (the same Laurel Country of Madison County collected by Sharp) as Walter and Homer, were influenced by the local and family ballad traditions, for several of the older ballads later recorded by the brothers were traditional tunes they learned from their parents. However, they possessed versatile repertoires and were a great example of musicians who had a "propensity to accept materials from any source so long as it fits

well with their personal styles."[56] They were known for their high brother duets and close harmonies, and were considered an important group in the formation of the country and Texas Swing musical genres.

J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers

J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers were another western North Carolina group that grew up in an area where ballads were heavily collected. Mainer's band formed out of Buncombe County, where Asheville is the county seat, both home of Bascom Lamar Lunsford's Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, and the home base of the Conference of Southern Mountain Workers. Mainer and his musicians were a transitional group of their time--holding fast to old traditions of banjo breakdowns, fiddle tunes, and ballads, all the while incorporating new stylistic ideas and the beginnings of bluegrass.[57]

J.E. Mainer's Mountaineers were important to the formation of bluegrass. Ralph and Carter Stanley grew up listening to Mainer and his band, and adored their stylistic techniques and improvisations. Joe Wilson, a friend of and scholar of the Stanley Brothers, states "the Stanleys were really patterned after Mainer when they first went to radio much more than they were after Monroe or any of those people."[58] Mainer's band balanced tradition with new "hot licks," later earning the Mountaineers notoriety as influential musicians in the formation of bluegrass.

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[56] Bill C. Malone, *Country Music U.S.A: A Fifty Year History.* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1968), 124.

[57] Bill C. Malone, *Country Music U.S.A: A Fifty Year History.* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1968), 120.

[58] John Wright, *Traveling the High Way Home: Ralph Stanley and the World of Traditional Bluegrass Music.*(Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 83.

Molly O'Day

Molly O'Day, her husband Lynn Davis, and their band the Cumberland Mountain Folks was another band instrumental in the early radio and development of bluegrass traditions. O'Day captured the hearts of many, as she and her band played the mountain community circuits and local radio shows, just like many other musicians of her time.

Known for her many eastern-Kentucky style native American ballads and religious songs, O'Day's smooth and gentle vocals quickly made her a favorite in the developing bluegrass and country arenas. O'Day recorded "The Drunken Driver" in the same spirit as many of her other "songs of tragedy of human life."[59] "The Drunken Driver" is a song that has entered important ballad repertoires in various communities of western North Carolina. O'Day's visits into schoolhouses of the area, as well as her air play on radio stations WWNC and WNOX (both aired into remote areas), added new material to singers and musicians with sacred song, Child Ballad and native American ballad traditions, as well as various instrumental styles of banjo, fiddle, and emerging guitar playing. Dillard Chandler, one of the last "old timers" documented in Madison County's old world ballad traditions, was recorded by John Cohen in 1970 singing Molly O'Day's "The Drunken Driver."[60] O'Day learned this song from the obscure Hamid Sisters from Bluefield, West Virginia. Her husband, Lynn, "recalls that she once received 4,000 requests on a single day for the song."[61] It is more likely that Chandler learned this song from the radio or directly or indirectly from Molly O'Day's local performances,

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[59] Ivan M. Tribe, and John W. Morris, "Molly O'Day and Lynn Davis: A Strong Influence on Bluegrass Music." *Bluegrass Unlimited.* Vol. 9, no.3. (September 1974): 10-15.

[60] John Cohen, *Dillard Chandler: End of an Old Song.* Folkways Records, 2418: 1970. (also see liner notes by Robert Balsam)

[61] Ivan M. Tribe, and John W. Morris, "Molly O'Day and Lynn Davis: A Strong Influence on Bluegrass Music." *Bluegrass Unlimited.* Vol. 9, no.3. (September 1974): 13.

than from the Hamid Sisters. The popularity of this particular song suggests the impact it would have on both traditional music circles, like that of Earl Silvers and of Dillard Chandler, and the developing bluegrass arena.

Ivan Tribe claims O'Day had a considerable impact on bluegrass repertoires, even though their style was much more country. "Songs like 'Six More Miles,' 'Matthew Twenty-Four,' 'Tramp on the Street,' and 'Teardrops Falling in the Snow,' have been recorded by several bluegrass groups."[62] Tribe goes even further to suggest that O'Day is somewhat of an icon to the few women bluegrass performers, like Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, declaring that many "owe her a debt similar to the one that many tenor singers do to Bill Monroe."[63]

Both traditional ballad traditions and classic bluegrass have recently experienced a resurgence with the independent film *Songcatcher,* which filled both the pockets of art theater owners across the United States and the consciousness of their audience, and the surprisingly popular Cohen brother's film, *O' Brother, Where Art Thou. O' Brother, Where Art Thou* was a huge success, reaching a much larger audience than the film *Songcatcher,* but nonetheless, both films have been major catalysts in revitalizing national interest in traditional music. Both have contributed a compact disc, reaching new audiences with the traditions, and filling the ears of millions with the old sounds and treasured hits of yesteryear. A collaboration of internationally known professional musicians recorded heavily embellished songs for the *Songcatcher* soundtrack, very different from the stark and haunting versions sung a cappella by traditional Appalachian musicians in the movie, suggesting that the modern ear would not appreciate

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[62] ibid., 13.
[63] ibid., 15.

traditionalists such as Bobby McMillon and Hazel Dickens. The success of the first CD, with popular musicians that blend country, folk, and bluegrass lines, hinged on the soul-felt crooning and the popularity of Americana music divas such as Gillian Welch, Roseanne Cash, Dolly Parton, and Sara Watkins, all performing variants of existing ballads remaining in western North Carolina repertoires. America may have not been ready for the traditional voices of these tunes, but it *has* welcomed the presence of new contributions of old music.

Ralph Stanley's delivery of "O' Death" in *O Brother Where Art Thou* went over the top of acceptance expectations. At a concert at Appalachian State University in the spring of 2002, Stanley performed this song a cappella, and the crowd went wild. Granted, this is not the expected response to such a powerful song, but mainstream America has become smitten with the power that Stanley displays. Since the success of *O' Brother* and *Songcatcher,* Stanley has released his most recent compact disc, which is self-titled simply *Ralph Stanley.* It is steeped in the musical traditions of Appalachia--with foundations in bluegrass, Celtic traditions, religious music and balladry. Stanley has had an affinity or the traditional sound of mountain music, but the success of *O' Brother, Where Art Thou* has given him new audiences and more liberty to showcase his foundations in Appalachian musical traditions. Stanley has recorded with various country musicians, such as Dwight Yoakum, Patty Lovelace, Jim Lauderdale, and Marty Stuart, just to name a few. He has been a traditional music gatekeeper in the preceding generations of classic country and bluegrass music. Granted the context in which Sharp and other song catchers collected has changed, but the traditions have found a way to

exist and inspire in a digital society. Transmission modes and styles may change, but the mountain themes within the music still stay the same.

In *Only A Miner,* Archie Green, a highly respected folklorist in American musical realms, addresses the role that commercially available recordings play in society, once adopted as a musical form of identity by a cultural group. *Only A Miner* focuses on this phenomenon specifically in the coal camps of Appalachia, but this can be more widely applied to cultural groups like rural mountain families, like that of Earl Silver's, for example. Green also reiterates how these recordings interact with transmission and preservation:

> Essentially, sound recordings have helped preserve coal miners' energy and emotion—their folklore. Discs holding any songs are artifacts of plural function: capsules of verbal and musical data, marketable objects intended for profit, pleasure-giving devises, commentaries on the society in which records themselves are produced and purchased... In this sense, any particular disc is a tool that both holds and extends American tradition.[64]

Green acknowledges the importance that sound recordings have had on shaping the American perceptions of folk music, as well as tradition. In Chapter Four, I discuss several songs that Earl learned from his mother and from early country music radio, which reiterates Green's point that the recording both "holds and extends" American tradition.

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[64] Archie Green, *Only A Miner.* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 450.

Chapter 3: Methodology

A devout lover of various mountain music forms, I realized that Earl Silver's songs that I had heard him sing since childhood were an active process of folklore, and deserved scholarly attention. Earl's appreciation of mountain music is not uncommon in Yancey County. The county hosts "Old Timey Days on the Square" each year, which is a mountain folklife festival held in downtown Burnsville in the late summertime. The county also has a large number of residents who attend and perform at various local venues, such as Young's Mountain Music, Old Fort Mountain Music, and the Apple Orchard at Altapass on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Earl is one of many Yancey County residents who appreciate mountain music, but his story is of great interest to me because of our relationship and family ties.

On April 6, 2002, Earl Silvers and I met at my aunt Opal's home for the first collection. In the spring of 2002, I had decided to do a collecting project exploring Earl's ballad traditions in Dr. Cecelia Conway's Appalachian Music/Advanced Folklore class at Appalachian State University. We made three tapes that day, and that just scratched the surface of his deep repertoire. Since that time, Earl and I have continued this project. Because Earl and his wife Shirley are always at my aunt Opal's home for Sunday dinner, I have had ample opportunity to work with Earl collecting his songs and stories. The setting of the various interviews is primarily at my Aunt Opal's trailer, originally on Mitchell Branch, but later at her new home site in the Silver's family hollow in Green Mountain in Yancey County.

I began interviewing Earl to try to understand the relationship of the radio and ballad repertoires in Madison County, with the hopes of understanding the role mountain music played in the lives of families like that of Earl Silvers in the mid-twentieth century. Earl answered my questions about his family history, genealogy, and cultural traditions upheld by his family, and provided his insights into the preservation and perseverance of mountain musical traditions in western North Carolina. Earl provided insightful details about learning songs, hearing songs, and his childhood, as well as the answers to my multitude of questions. In the beginning, the "psychological setting" was Earl trying to matter of factly answer my questions about singing traditions and their relation to his childhood. We started the first interview in Aunt Opal's living room on April 21, 2002, but only five minutes into the tape I realized that the two squawking cockatiels, a singing baby, telephone, and the influx of people in and out of the house distracted the interview process and also added a great amount of noise to the field recording. We then went into the back room of the trailer, where the only communication we had with the outside world was an occasional note slid under the door to Earl from my aunt Shirley, suggesting a song for him to sing, or a story for him to tell me. We spread out in the room, then talked for the rest of the afternoon.

In the beginning, I was severely intimidated by the prospect of doing family research; I was afraid I would offend Earl by asking questions that might dredge up painful memories, by making a mistake within my retelling of his story, or fail him by misunderstanding or misinterpreting the information. The rapport and family connection I have with Earl made me extra apprehensive about conducting this research. At first, I resisted videotaping Earl because I thought that I would be intruding, and too voyeuristic.

However, about six months into the research, we had both grown comfortable enough to begin to film. These film situations, interestingly, yielded Earl's best performances.

After that first collection, Earl took me to visit his brother Isaacs Silvers, who I also interviewed about their parents Zorie and Tom Silvers and the musical impact they had on their offspring. These tapes did not transcribe well, as the recorder picked up too much noise from other people and objects in the room. Isaac did not remember as much about his mother's musical tradition as Earl, although he was quite conversant about his extensive acknowledge of bluegrass and traditional music. Before he lost a finger in an accident, Isaac played bluegrass guitar and banjo. He managed to play several tunes during the interview, but the sound quality of the room was too poor to get a good recording.

Several weeks after I had interviewed Earl and Isaac, I made the journey to Eden, North Carolina to interview Lonnie, Earl's oldest brother. I took Neil Cribbs, a fellow student in my class with Dr. Conway, to help me with the videotaping and the interview process. We talked about bluegrass music and Lonnie only mentioned a few things about his father's and mother's musical traditions. Earl credited his mother and father for sharing so much music with him, so it was interesting to talk to Lonnie and Isaac, who did not remember the same songs as Earl and had different musical interests. Both Isaac and Lonnie were musicians, and were skilled instrumentally. We got wonderful video footage, however, of Lonnie's accounts of bluegrass festivals, meeting various bluegrass musicians, and instruments he had made. Neil Cribbs conducted a collecting project based on Lonnie Silvers, and talked about Lonnie's bluegrass influences within his presentation and paper.

The interview process began as an exploration of Earl's family musical traditions and was not originally intended to be my thesis research. However, the interviews began to evolve into a revelation of Earl's sense of self and identity within his family context and his role as a son and a brother. Earl originally began sharing himself as a singer and an uncle, but later, he began to reveal himself as a person.

Earl became the focus of various papers and projects within my graduate course work. I wanted to be able to focus on collecting from him to develop a body of research for class assignments. When I started to write my third paper about Earl, I realized that he should be the primary focus of my thesis. I had begun with a broad interest in music and methods of transmission, and I was enamored of ballad traditions all over western North Carolina. When talking to Earl about my interest in ballads and singing for him songs I had come across on various recordings, I realized that Earl had a folk knowledge of the same information I was trying to come by academically. Not only did Earl know about ballads in western North Carolina, he sang them as well. He also sang songs from the early country music radio era in a style that was uncommon. When I heard Earl sing "The Drunken Driver," which was also featured on the John Cohen recording of Dillard Chandler, *End of an Old Song,* I realized that I should write my thesis about Earl, for he represented a piece of history about the transition of old world ballad style singing into both old ballads and early country, and was representative of dozens of non-professional mountain singers in western North Carolina. Research had been done on the ballad singers of Sodom Laurel and surrounding Madison County, for the Folk Music Revival had been peppered with Madison County singers. However, the heavy concentration and emphasis on old world balladry fails to document the blend of early commercial country

and these traditions, yielding a hole in telling the rest of the story of the evolution of mountain music and song.

A focus on Earl Silvers required quality multimedia documentation to capture Earl's songs and stories. A multimedia productions class provided instruction on use of a digital video camera, Imovie, Final Cut Pro, and Photoshop. The thesis video consists of 28 minutes of fieldwork modified and edited for a tidy presentation of Earl and his singing traditions. The final video of Earl Silvers, burned to both DVD and videocassette tape, complements my thesis research and gives the reader a first hand opportunity to see Earl in performance, as well as photographs and footage of his family and community.

For six weeks during the summer of 2003, I traveled around Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and England. Following a summer school course and an internship in Wales, I sought out traditional music performances and recordings in the British Isles, visiting Galway, Doolin, and Dublin while in Ireland, searching for Irish music. While in Doolin, the self-appointed home of Irish traditional music, I found a recording "Grand Airs of Connemara," which was a recording of a cappella Gaelic traditional songs of the country. I made field recordings in pubs in Galway, recording fiddle tunes and traditional Irish performances. I began to understand the departure Appalachian music had from Celtic music, once I was immersed in music in Ireland. Much of the Celtic music I heard was happy and driving and did not have the same lamenting and woeful tone that even the same prototypes of songs had in the mountains of Appalachia, specifically in western North Carolina, though by no means did I gain a full familiarity with the extent of Celtic and Irish music.

I spent two days with international ballad scholar Michael Yates and his family on the coast of Northern England, in the town of Berrick-Upon-Tweed. I had first talked to Yates via the Internet six months prior to my trip. I had discussed with him my thesis research and interests regarding his series of essays about Cecil Sharp and ballads of western North Carolina, available online at http://www.mustrad.org/. We had quickly developed a friendship while trying to identify a Mrs. Sotherland from whom Sharp collected. Yates had collected in western North Carolina in the early 1980s, venturing over to retrace the steps of Cecil Sharp sixty years before. Yates knew many Madison County ballad singers, as well as other researchers such as Rob Amburg. During Yates' visit, he met many of the premiere western North Carolina and southwestern Virginia singers, as well as those researching them. Yates had conducted an amazing amount of research and had fresh perspectives on these traditions and their relationship to their earlier home in the British Isles. Yates' research has been presented in field recordings with excellent liner notes and in online articles.[65] He has an extensive knowledge of Appalachian music traditions and plays wonderful clawhammer banjo. Yates and I spent hours sitting around talking about balladry, tradition, and Cecil Sharp, and he helped me draw connections to western North Carolina ballads and the context of song in the ancient British Isles. Yates helped me catch a train to London, to finish my journey conducting research at the Cecil Sharp Memorial Library at the English Folk and Dance Society in Regent's Park, London, England.

From Yates I learned more about the presence of balladry in Appalachia and its connections to the British Isles, solidifying my interpretations of Earl's traditions and predecessors. This visit with Yates was a wonderful complement to the research I

[65] Yates, Mike. *Appalachia - the Old Traditions,* vol. 1& 2, Home-Made Music LP001 and LP002: 1981.

conducted with Earl. Yates talked about other songs that he recorded from Appalachian musicians, particularly singers, performing in the early 1980s; these songs were not old world ballads but religious and folk tunes, as well as songs learned through the radio. Much like that of British collector Cecil Sharp, Yates' research interest was those songs that were from the British Isles. We discussed my thesis and hypotheses concerning retransmission of old ballads as commercial recordings into new repertoires, such as "*The Soldier and the Lady",* mentioned in Chapter 4. From discussions, I gleaned a better understanding of the important relationship between commercial recordings and folk transmission.

At the Cecil Sharp Memorial Library, I spent two-and-a-half days going through Sharp's manuscripts and photographs from his collecting trip in 1916 to 1918, compiling a complete list of Madison, Yancey, and Unicoi County singers listed in his manuscripts. I photocopied sections of his journals of his visit to Madison and Yancey Counties, searching for any information relevant to Yancey County ballad traditions of Earl's predecessors. I looked for individuals in the communities where Earl lived as a child to determine to what songs Sharp recorded them singing. I was hoping to find reference to Katherine Sotherland, the woman who taught Earl's mother, Zorie, a version of "Barbara Allen," but nothing turned up. I went through Sharp's diaries of his visits to Madison and Yancey Counties to see if he mentioned any of the names Earl mentioned in interviews, trying to see if I could connect Earl to any individuals collected by Sharp. It was through this research that I realized how important these ballad traditions were to Cecil Sharp, and his influence on folklorists and scholars because of his passion in collecting these songs.

Before I left for my six-week trip to the United Kingdom and Ireland, I completed a rough draft of my thesis. Much of my thesis is based on four different papers I have written for various classes while in the Appalachian Studies Masters of Arts program. The title of these papers are as follows: "Ballads, Bluegrass, and the Radio: A Story of Survival," "Earl Silvers and His Hand-Me-Down Songs," "The Emergence of Both Self and Meta-Meta Narrative within the Songs of Earl Silvers," and "Riding the Air Waves of Change: The Radio's Impact on Traditional Music Repertoires In Western North Carolina." I have included clips of Earl in the presentation of these various papers at the Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference, held in Richmond, Kentucky in March of 2003 and the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico October 2003. I presented my video documenting Earl's traditions at the Celebration of Student Research Endeavors at Appalachian State University in April 2003.

The video includes several thematic videos set up like music videos seen on MTV or VH1, with a history and title of the song in the lower left hand corner to give the viewer a bit of information about the song Earl is singing. Earl and Shirley loaned me photo albums to scan for use in the video, many of which required significant cleaning due to mildew and moisture damage. Many of these I scanned and used within the video, suggesting Earl's memories attached to the songs featured in the video.[66]

The video is intended to serve as an addition to my thesis, giving the reader a multimedia experience of Earl and his traditions. The video will also be circulated to his family members, a product to give back to my family that was so patient and helpful with the research for this thesis. A copy will be given to his two daughters and their families,

[66] see Appendix 3, contents list for video that accompanies this thesis.

as well as his sister, Opal and both his brothers, Lonnie and Isaac Silvers. Hopefully, this video will continue to float around among the Silvers family for years to come, possibly even after Earl is no longer with us.

Presentations of this body of research have shaped both the interview process and the final thesis and video. Obviously, to include every song Earl sang for me in the multitude of recordings I made would be overwhelming for the viewer. In the same right, I felt that there was quite a bit of overlap in Earl's repertoire. Some songs were fragmented; some were interrupted with metanarrative about the story within the song he was singing. Earl has never sung professionally, and other than a recording made of him and his brothers singing "Amazing Grace" and "The Knoxville Girl" at age five and the several home videos and cassette tapes the Silvers' family made for grandchildren, Earl has never been recorded. Some of the songs he sang for me he had not tried to sing in fifty years. Some songs were attached to painful memories or nostalgia and were left out of the video out of respect to Earl and his family secrets or his personal life. My fear of overanalyzing or prying too deep into Earl's life kept me in check about what I should include in transcripts, include in the video, or put in the thesis. Being Earl's niece has created some degree of tension and a strong sense of obligation to respect his privacy. There were avenues of discussion I did not venture down, and there were many afternoons that I didn't include a tape recorder in our conversations and visited just as a family member, not as a researcher.

Chapter 4: Hand-Me-Down Songs

In this chapter I discuss Earl's repertoire of songs taught to him by his mother, father, and the radio. An in-depth look at the transmission of these songs reveals the emotional and nostalgic value that Earl places on singing and talking about his life. A breakdown of several of the songs collected from Earl includes the lyrics Earl sings as well as the narrative he provides about the song's significance or the people he heard sing. Earl's stories surrounding the songs, or metanarrative, are indicative of the importance that singing plays in Earl's life. They are just as important as the songs themselves.

Earl Silvers was born on June 18, 1936 in the Higgins community of Yancey County, North Carolina. He is the son of the late Tom and Zorie Higgins Silvers. His father was born in 1881 in Higgins, North Carolina, and Tom was the son of Bud and Melissa "Sookie" Morrow Silvers. Tom's grandfather, Marv Silvers, was the brother of Jacob Silvers, the father of the legendary Charlie Silvers. Charlie's wife, Frankie, was convicted of killing him and was the first white woman hung in North Carolina, an event that occurred in 1833.[67] Earl's interesting family ties to the legendary Frankie Silver demonstrate the last 180-year occupation of the Silvers family in what are now Mitchell, Yancey, Burke, and Avery counties, and his connection to a long line of western North Carolina ancestry. The Frankie Silvers story has been published in various forms-- from a ballad and a best-selling novel, to various publications inquiring into the truth

[67] See appendix 2 for family tree chart.

surrounding the incident, while the murder of Charlie Silvers has been an integral part of western North Carolina's cultural identity.[68]

Tom Silvers is said to have had four wives, the final wife being Zorie Higgins Silvers. Tom had several children by his different wives, and Earl had a unique experience growing up with multigenerational siblings. The age difference between Tom and Earl also is a factor in Earl's connections to earlier cultural and musical traditions; the songs that Tom and his brothers sang and played for Earl added an important element to Earl's repertoire. A twenty-two year age difference between Tom and Zorie, Earl's mother, also had a significant impact on Earl's musical traditions; the early radio songs and local gospel music were encouraged by both his parents, but Tom also played old fiddle tunes and banjo tunes passed on through his family.

Earl's parents moved all over western North Carolina with a brief stint in eastern Kentucky where Tom and his brother-in-law worked in the coalmines. This venture into eastern Kentucky was short-lived, however, and Earl and his brother, Lonnie, remember it differently. Lonnie, the oldest, claims that his father went to Kentucky before they were born, but Earl claims he remembers riding in a covered wagon to and from Kentucky. Regardless, Earl spent the majority of his childhood living in different locations in western North Carolina, while his father worked in the timber industry. Earl recalls living in temporary housing while his father worked for Champion Fiber Company, filling in for his eldest son, Bill (from an earlier marriage), while he fought in World War II. The

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[68] Tom Davenport, *The Ballad of Frankie Silvers.* Davenport Films. 1998;
Sharyn McCrumb, *The Ballad of Frankie Silvers.* (New York, NY: Signet Books, 1999);
Daniel W. Patterson, *A Tree Accurst, Bobby McMillon and Stories of Frankie Silver.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000);
Muriel Early Sheppard, *The Cabins in the Laurel.* 1935;
Perry Deane Young , *The Untold Story of Frankie Silver.*(Down Home Press, June 1998).

family lived in many different remote communities, and supplemented the income from Champion, using the different opportunities for collecting and selling herb and tanbark.[69]

> We lived in these little old houses; Champion Fiber Company had these big GI trucks. They'd move these little houses, they was just like big boxes, made of plywood, and they'd just set up how many ever a family needed for the house, and they had a tarpaulin roof, and a little old tin wood heater we used to heat with, and that's what we stayed in, those little buildings. A many a time we moved way back in the mountains, they'd take the dozer, and knock out a little place near a spring, and we'd move and have things set up in one day.[70]

The family spent a great amount of time together; they were too far from a schoolhouse for the children to attend a school, until finally, when Earl was twelve years old, they moved to Flat Creek, near Leicester, in Buncombe County.[71] Earl entered the first grade, and ended up going to school for four years, although he completed the seventh grade. At home, his mother Zorie worked with the children including four sons Lonnie, Earl, Isaac, and Andrew and two daughters, Verlan and Gladys, teaching them their ABC's, numbers, and a little bit of arithmetic. Zorie lost two children, a daughter, Evangeline, when she was about two years old, from bleeding ulcers, and another baby to diphtheria. Evangeline died about the time that Earl went to school.

Earl lived in many different communities in his childhood, and these experiences both strengthened his relationships with his immediate family and also widened the musical repertoire of his mother and father. Though they moved about, the family always

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[69] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, April 21, 2002.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

had a radio, and would tune into *The Grand Ole Opry* and *The Mid-Day Merry Go-Round*, the latter aired over radio station WNOX, out of Knoxville, Tennessee, and hosted by musician Lowell Blanchard. Eastern Tennessee had become a Mecca for the radio broadcasts of bluegrass music and was only a couple mountains away from wherever the Silvers family moved, often yielding a decent quality of broadcasting. In *Tennessee Strings: The Story of Country Music in Tennessee,* Charles Wolfe talked about how the radio stations in Eastern Tennessee played "'purer' forms of country music because they did not have to please a wide and diverse audience; many listeners in the hills of Tennessee still liked the old styles and the old songs."[72] Earl recollected that his favorite musicians on those radio broadcasts were Molly O'Day, Lynn Davis, and Eddie Arnold.

> There was some place, I'm not exactly sure where this station was at, *Mid-day Merry-Go-Round*, we'd always listen to that. We could get *The Grand Ole Opry* on Saturday nights--that was on a far away station, but we could get it. And the old radio had that outside antenna wire stretched up. We lived at this one place, and we couldn't hardly get nothing on the radio, when we lived at Lake Junaluska, and we got out, and my dad got enough wire somewhere to run it way [voice raises] up on the mountain, and we done that we got the Grand Ole Opry, and several other stations. Seems like the more aerial-wire you had, the more you would pick up...[73]

The radio was an integral part of the Silvers family's daily life. The traditional balladry of the western North Carolina mountains quickly intertwined with music played

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[72] Charles Wolfe, *Tennessee Strings: The Story of Country Music in Tennessee,* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977), 56.

[73] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, April 21, 2002.

over the radio waves. Much of Earl's repertoire has been derived from his mother, who was listening to the radio just like many other western North Carolinians, as well as learning 'ballits,' as she had called them, from people in the different communities that they slipped in and out of while Tom was working for Champion Fiber Company. "Weeping Willow," is a song that Earl remembers his mother singing; it initially seems like a folk lyric, reflecting a connection to deep Celtic roots, including personification of a tree, with it emotive responses. However, this song was written by Ralph Blankenship and was sung by Earl's favorite singer, Molly O'Day. Earl recalls his mother singing this song in his childhood, so that through aural tradition, the song arrived within the Silvers family repertoire.

Though Zorie Silvers has passed away, her son, Earl Silvers, is the closest living link to the music she sang and the music she taught to her children. Unlike other brothers and sisters, Earl stayed near his mother and father throughout all of their lives. He didn't just hear the songs in childhood and then leave home, leaving the songs behind. Rather, he stayed in the area and absorbed them into his own repertoire, singing them to his children and grandchildren. One evidence of this strong desire to continue the tradition of his mother's songs is that Earl has made several audio tapes of himself singing various songs that Zorie had sung to him for his grandchildren to listen to before going to sleep, in case he wasn't around to sing to them. Earl recalled the two older granddaughters, Leah and Katrina Hoover, carrying around their little recorders, listening to their Papaw sing to them.

The importance of enacted kinship displayed by Earl and his family is a result of the high priority placed upon family and community in his childhood. Earl's mother,

Zorie, was an illegitimate child, whose mother died when Zorie was an infant. Zorie went to live with her birth-father only after she was old enough to tend to his other children, who were abandoned when their mother died as well. Zorie raised these children for her father, Isaac Higgins, and then was left out of her father's will upon his death. She never had a family of her own until she met Tom, who was twenty-two years her elder. Before her return to her birth father's home, she had been raised as a part of Bud Silver's family, Tom's father, but being twenty-two years younger than Tom, she was quite young while Tom was married to his first three wives. Her marriage to Tom established a family of her own, and the importance of family to Zorie permeated Earl's life as well.

Close familial ties are just as important in Earl's wife's family. Shirley Marie Robinson Silvers, daughter of Noah and Ruby Riddle Robinson, is one of the twelve children born in the Robinson family. Out of the nine maturing to adulthood, Shirley and her sister Opal have played an integral role in maintaining family ties, especially after the passing of their mother in 1998. The two sisters are inseparable; most of the interview with Earl was conducted in the home of Opal Robinson. Family and friendship are intertwined between these two sisters, reaffirming to Shirley's and Earl's children and grandchildren the value of family. Opal, who never married, lived with her mother and father until they died and then still continued to draw the other brothers, sisters, and their offspring back home for get-together and dinners. Shirley helped Opal out extensively when their mother was sick, just as Shirley also frequently looked after Zorie in her later years, and has expressed much love and devotion to her mother-in-law, with particular sensitivity to Zorie's difficult childhood.

Earl and Shirley have nurtured musical traditions with their grandchildren, buying the oldest granddaughters, Leah and Katrina Hoover, a guitar and paying for lessons with Earl's brother, Isaac. Though the girls have since abandoned the guitar lessons, the oldest is taking fiddle lessons as well as piano and flute. Both girls are on a clogging team in the county, and dance on different occasions in the community.

Earl and Shirley, as well as their daughters, have supported these activities and reinforced their cultural connections to southern Appalachia by reaffirming these values with their children and grandchildren. Shirley is their primary childcare provider, having tended to all four grandchildren while their mothers are at work. The youngest two, Kaitlyn and Levi McKinney, are too young for music or dance lessons, but Earl and Shirley reinforce these cultural values to them by singing to them, playing games like "bore a hole, bore a hole, bore 'em in the belly" with the children, singing to them the old songs, and being a part of their everyday lives

The Sources and Influences of Earl's Repertoire

The music of Earl Silvers is an amalgamation of an extensive aural repertoire from his mother Zorie and the influence of the radio. His father Tom, a banjo and fiddle player, was a remnant of an older generation, though it is unknown how and when he learned to play both instruments. Tom lived for a brief stint in Kentucky where he worked in the coalmines. He had lived half of his life before Earl was born, and there was plenty to influence his repertoire. Earl recalls his father playing songs like "Old Joe Clark," "Cotton Eyed Joe," and "all those old timeys, he'd play them…" He remembers him:

> playing the fiddle and they'd get him to play at parties and all, at big get-togethers on Saturday nights, and they'd always have him booked somewheres to make music…[laughter][74]

Earl also remembers him playing a homemade 'banjer,' and he liked to play popular radio songs. Earl recalls when:

> that "Wildwood Flower" first come out, my dad listened to Maybelle Carter pick it, and he said, "well I believe I can pick that on the banjer". He started to pick it on the banjer, and somebody heard him pick it, and there come up a big party, and someone asked him to pick it, and he said, "I don't know if I can remember that tune or not," so he got his banjer out and flummed on it, and started picking that "Wildwood Flower" out on the banjer, and everybody just went crazy over it. Every Saturday night then, wherever he played, they'd requested him to pick that "Wildwood Flower" on the five-string banjer. I don't think it sounds as good on the banjer as it does on the guitar.[75]

The banjo that belonged to his Uncle Rex Hensley, the husband of Tom's sister, Laurie, looked a little fancier than the one Tom made for himself. Interestingly, Laurie was the one who claimed to own the fancier banjo, but both Laurie and her husband Rex shared the instrument. Earl talked about Laurie playing the banjo, and remembered that:

> she'd pick or she'd strum either. They called it strummed when they'd flip it like that. Like a claw hammer. Now she would sing

[74] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, April 21, 2002.
[75] ibid.

> with her music, most of the time. When she'd sing, she'd strum it, and when she'd stop singing, she'd pick it. She'd sing the chorus, then pick the chorus.[76]

This research parallels that which Conway presents in *African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia,* on Lily, the wife of Dink Roberts. Conway's research suggests a connection between African-American traditions of incorporating the experience of the song and of banjo performance styles, which is less likely to create a separation between the singer and the song. Perhaps Aunt Laurie's influence came from a black banjo player, either directly or indirectly.[77] Conway has often discussed the differences in tradition between men and women, suggesting that for the woman banjo performer, the song is more of an extension of herself, and is less a performance.

Earl remembers that his Aunt Laurie and his mother:

> liked to sing all kinds of old songs. Stuff they'd hear off the radio, stuff that was handed own for years and years and all. There were lots of old songs handed down from years to years. One of the old songs my momma used to sing was "*Coming Home, oh Lord, I'm coming home.*" I don't remember exactly the words to it, but anyhow I heard her singing that a lot. Aunt Laurie sang an old song… I can't remember nothing.[78]

Though Earl recollects much more about the history behind his family's music than any of the other siblings I have interviewed, he still feels like he can't remember enough.

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[76] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, April 21, 2002.

[77] Cecelia Conway, *African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia: A Study of Folk Traditions.* (University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, TN,1995), 243-4.

[78] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, April 21, 2002.

However, he has helped begin to fill in a gap in the musical history of Yancey County, North Carolina, and the role of traditional music in western North Carolina. But just as memories start to fade, so do the locations of various family artifacts. Unfortunately, no one knows the location of Tom Silver's musical instruments. Earl thought that his brother, Lonnie, may have his old fiddle, and possibly the homemade banjo, but Lonnie told us he didn't have it when we asked.

Earl's mother possibly played the greatest role in the development of Earl's repertoire. She had a hard life. In addition to bearing the stigma of losing her mother in infancy, Zorie lost two of her eight children in their early childhood. Evangeline died of an unidentified disease:

> It wasn't nothing but what they call bleeding ulcers that killed her, she was throwing up blood. Back then they didn't give no transfusion at all, like that, so she just died. [Then] there was one younger than Andrew, and it died, it died of the diphtheria. I was about twelve year old. Yeah, they never did name it, it just lived a few hours after it was born.[79]

Earl recalls Zorie singing lots of religious songs, which may have helped fill the void of losing her two children. Perhaps music helped fill the silences, as well as bring her joy. It is apparent that her music served as a comfort; she sang religious songs to her children throughout their childhood, and made a prominent enough mark in Earl's life to comfort him through childhood. Earl recalls Zorie singing often.

> She sang lots of songs. I can't even remember all the names of them, and then a lot of them I can remember, I can just have the

[79] Ibid.

> sounds and all just pictured in my head, but I can't put the words together. She'd sing "Barbara Allen", and [there] was religious type songs she'd sing.[80]

Earl remembers his mother recording variants of ballads, and collecting the different versions of songs and writing them down. Zorie was literate, she taught the children much of what they knew, despite limited schooling, and she helped Tom interpret the positions of various signs necessary for planting. Earl never mentions going to church as a child, so Zorie most likely learned the songs within her religious genre from her childhood, from radio, and from other people within the various communities in which they lived. Earl recalled her specifically collecting a variant of "Barbara Allen" from a Katherine Sutherland when they lived in Leicester, in Buncombe County, North Carolina. When asked where the different ballads came from, Earl said:

> I don't know, she just got a hold of the two ballads...from somewhere. Katherine Sutherland is where she got one ballad from, the other one I don't know, she knowed it as far back as I could remember... [Katherine Sutherland was] just a woman we met up with at Leicester... Ummhummm. She'd sing it different from momma'd sing it, so they'd swap ballads.[81]

Earl recalls many of the songs being sung, as well as learned in a community setting, and were, in so many words, "contagious." The songs were transmitted through social gatherings, for entertainment and for building community cultural connections. The songs, stories, and foodstuffs served as the loom to weave both individuals and

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[80] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, April 21, 2002.
[81] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, April 21, 2002.

cultural identities among different community members, thus creating a tight bond to harbor the community through the many challenges they faced. Earl recalled his childhood as a time when the community was tight:

> Back then, right up until I was a pretty good size fellow, everybody always knowed their neighbors. Like when we lived on Elk Shoal Creek, there was lets see, how many families? There was twelve or thirteen on the whole creek. Well, every Saturday night, the whole bunch, the whole community, would be somewheres, at somebody's house, having a big party. Singing, telling tales, playing cards, cook a big supper, and all. Every Saturday night, no matter if the snow was so deep, we went. And that's the way it was, wherever we lived, that's the way it was. You take somebody who'd get down sick, didn't have but a small pile of wood out here, the whole family would come in and get it fixed up.[82]

The strong ties of community were a cultural necessity, and in some cases, necessary to survival, etched a strong memory into Earl's mind. Fifty or so years later, he can still recall a story of community survival.

> When we lived out, I can't think of the old woman's name now, but her house caught a fire. It about burnt up. We was living out near Beaverdam, and this old woman's house about burnt down. Well, here come this man through, he was a hollering something. My daddy looked out, and he says, "What's wrong with that crazy fool?" And said to some of us youngun's, "Go out and see what

[82] Ibid.

> he's wanting." We went out, and he says, "I'm recruiting work-hands for tomorrow and next day." Well dad, in a way he was kind of Christian feller, but he just used it for a by-word, I reckon. He says, "who in the dickens is gonna work on Sunday?" in his way he said, "just who in the devil is gonna work on Sunday?" He says, "so-and-so's house burned," says, "damaged the roof, the ceiling and all, they got it put out before it burned down, but it's supposed to be bad next week and we are going to put her back in shelter."
>
> There was a bunch gathered up, you talk about... somebody furnished a pig, they killed a pig, dressed it out and cooked it, I guess most of it was eat, big pot of beans, they did the cooking all out over open fires, just like a big picnic. The whole community just gathered in. My dad done... I remembered it as well if it was yesterday, I remember dad taking that old froe and splitting those boards to cover that house with. And long before nightfall, they had the house fixed back, the roof on it, the ceiling in it and everything, and the smoke damage, took everything that had smoke damage out and washed it, cleaned it up. The women, the whole community cleaned it up in just one day's time, and that woman's house was like it should be. That's the way that people used to do things back then.[83]

This memory reflects the cultural value that Earl places upon community, which is also reflective in the close relationship that Earl and Shirley have with both their children and

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[83] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, April 21, 2002

Shirley's sister, Opal. These family members are Earl and Shirley's present day community, validating the cultural value of community.

The impact that Earl's mother made on his musical repertoire is massive. Not only did she introduce him to most of the songs he sings, she also instilled values of support to him and community within him, as well as reinforced the values of community members.

Influences on Others and Description of Performance Styles

Earl has not performed these songs in the context that many of the well-known ballad singers of western North Carolina have. He has never sung on stage or been deemed a "ballad singer." His songs are performed in a natural context; he sang to his family, to quiet restless children, to proclaim his beliefs and his social mores, to entertain, and to link others to his past. Though most of his repertoire may have been influenced either directly or indirectly by the radio, the songs have still fulfilled the function of traditional music and performance that they would have if he had never encountered a radio. The advent of technology may have enhanced his ability to pass down the songs in aural tradition, such as in the homemade tapes for his grandchildren, but he has not become a "performer" of these songs, specifically singing out of a staged context for the entertainment or for the educational purposes that many performers embrace. He has not tried to convert his musical abilities into a commercial art, but rather he keeps them as a feature of everyday life. Though his brothers play music, make musical instruments, and have intertwined bluegrass and country music into their everyday lives, Earl has preserved his music solely for the connection to the culture of his childhood, and academic research for his grandchildren. His music has obviously influenced the

researcher, and there is a risk that this study of his music has created a new context for Earl to perform his music. The study of Earl's traditions alters his performances, but it also allows a new look at transmission, context, and performance in a way that has never been done with his music.

Earl's "Hand-me-down Songs"

The beauty, history, and cultural value of these songs are of utmost importance within this study, and provide an excellent example of their influence on others. Earl's song choice is indicative of the importance he places on family, memory of home, the complications of love and military service, and his mountain identity. He calls many of his songs "old hand-me-down songs," much like the "hand-me-downs" clothes people wear that have been previously owned by a family member or neighbor. The attachment of this name to Earl's songs suggests a family connection, something shared between one family member and within the context of community that involves sharing one another's lives, possessions, and songs.

Song #1 "Free As a Little Bird"

I'm just as free as a little bird as I can be
I'll never build my nest on the ground
I'll build my nest in the hollow tree
Where the bad boys can never bother me

I'm a free little bird as I can be
I'll never build my nest on the ground
I'll build my nest in the Sweet Kitty's breast
Where the bad boys will never get to me

That's all I remember….

This song, also known as "Katy Cline" or as "Kitty Cline," is a song popular within the genres of southern Appalachian folk lyric. Some versions of this song,

however, can be traced back to "Kitty Clyde," a popular song that dates back to 1853, by L.V.H. Crosby. Ballad collector Louise Rand Bascom, labeled "Kitty Kline," (also known as "Free Little Bird") as being "the ballad which is most universally known" in western North Carolina; even suggesting that "it might be called the national song of the highlanders." Bascom also suggested that there are "almost as many versions as there are singers."[84] It is unknown, however, how Zorie Silvers learned this song. Because of its prevalence in western North Carolina, it is probable that she learned it through aural tradition within the community setting. But it is also quite possible that she learned this song through the radio shows, since it was recorded by several different hillbilly bands from east Tennessee and Georgia, and aired on the radio, at the latest, by 1928.

In our interviews, Earl gives no indication of where Zorie may have learned it. More important, Earl demonstrates the utility of the song that he sings to his granddaughter.

> **Where did you learn that one at?**
>
> Momma.
>
> **That one too?**
>
> Yes.
>
> **(to baby Kaitlyn) Do you like it when Papaw sings to you, Kaitlyn?**
>
> Yes, she likes it when Papaw sings. She tries to sang to Papaw, she tries to help Papaw sang…

Song #2 "Little Birdie in the Woods"

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[84] W.K. McNeil, *Southern Mountain Folksongs: Traditional Songs of the Appalachians and the Ozark,* (August House Publishers: Little Rock, Arkansas, 1993) 81-84.

Earl calls this song “one of them hand-me-down songs”:

Well, what about “Little Birdie in the Woods?”

Oh, a little ole’ song that my momma sang to us back when we was little, like I sing to Kaitlyn and Levi, and all.

Where are you going little bird, little bird
Where are you going little bird?
I’m going to the woods
I’m going to the woods
I’m going to the woods sweet chile.’

What’s in the woods, little bird, little bird
What’s in the woods, little bird?
There’s a nest in the woods
There’s a nest in the woods
There’s a nest in the woods, sweet chile.’

What’s in the nest little bird, little bird
What’s in the nest little bird?
There’s five little ones
There’s five little ones
There’s five little ones, sweet chile’.

What do they sing, little bird, little bird
What do they sing, little bird?
They sing praise the Lord
They sing praise the Lord
They sing praise the Lord, sweet chile.’

And that was one Zorie sang to you all?

Yeah, that was probably sung to me as a little baby.

Where do you think she learned that one from?

I don’t have the least idea. That was one of them hand-me-down songs.

There is little evidence of this song existing in other western North Carolina, southern Appalachian, or American repertoires. Nothing turned up in any of the ballad collections in the American Folklife Room of the Library of Congress, the Southern Folklife

Collection at Chapel Hill, in the Bascom Lamar Lunsford Ballad Collection (or any other collections at Mars Hill) Appalachian Room at Mars Hill College, or in the plethora of resources in the Appalachian Collection at Belk Library, of Appalachian State University. The only other variant that turned up was through a search on www.google.com, using a phrase from the song, which directed me to a website for YMCA camp songs from Washington State.[85] This song turned up on the YMCA site, except the last two verses on the website were:

Oh what's in the nest little bird, little bird?
Oh what's in the nest, little birdie?
There are five little eggs,
There are five little eggs
There are five little eggs, little child

Oh what's in the eggs, little bird, little bird?
Oh what's in the eggs, little birdie?
There are five little birds
There are five little birds
There are five little birds, little child.

However, the Silvers family version says:

What's in the nest little bird, little bird
What's in the nest little bird?
There's five little ones
There's five little ones
There's five little ones, sweet chile'.

What do they sing, little bird, little bird
What do they sing, little bird?
They sing praise the Lord
They sing praise the Lord
They sing praise the Lord, sweet chile.'

Though there is little distinct religious content in the Silvers family musical genres, including hymns, in this song is the interesting tag "They sing praise the Lord, sweet

[85] http://www.backyardgardener.com/loowit/song/song170.html

chile'." It is impossible to draw any more connections about the origins, of this song, other than that it was transmitted through an aural tradition, until more research discloses other variants. Yet it is intriguing that this song is documented only in a western North Carolina family, and in a YMCA camp in the state of Washington.

Song #3 "Barbara Allen"

The ballad "Barbara Allen" is one of the most well known ballad in both America and the British Isles. The ballad has existed in a multitude of forms and dates back to at least 1666, when it was documented in the most well-known diary of seventeenth century London, by famous diarist, Samuel Pepys. Pepys records "Barbara Allen" being sung in England, referring to the song as "the little Scottish tune."[86] "Barbara Allen" has been an American favorite, in both as a traditional Appalachian ballad carried over from the British Isles and as a contemporary song recorded by a diverse group of musicians worldwide. It is the most well known ballad in the world. "Barbara Allen" is a very important song in Earl's repertoire as well, and Earl remembers two distinct versions of the song, recalling the different origins of each variant.

> **Did she teach you Barbara Allen? Do you still sing that one?**
>
> Well, there's two different ballads to that, and I would have to dwell on it for a long time to figure out which one is what, and to not get them mixed up together, but anyhow, she had two ballads of it. They were pretty much alike, in ways, and a lot of the words had some verses in it were a little different. But anyhow, Willie came from a foreign

[86]ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), vol.7.

land and courted Barbara Allen, that was all, and in one of

them,... shoot, I can't separate it. Well, if I sing it, I'll have

the two of them mixed up together...

That's okay

Anyhow, one of them says,

> *They sent a servant to the town*
> *Where Barbara was a dwellin',*
> *masters sick and sent for you*
> *if your name is Barbara Allen,*

The other one doesn't have that line in it. Then there's

> *She walked down those long shady pines,*
> *And heard the birds a singin',*
> *And everything seemed to say*
> *Hard-hearted Barbara Allen.*

Well, the other one is

> *she walked down those shady pines*
> *and heard the bells a ringin'.*

Will you sing me how you remember it?

I am pretty sure I couldn't sing it without getting it mixed up together...

Well, if that's how you remember it, though, that's fine.

Anyhow,

> *One day one day, in the month of May*
> *The green buds they were swellin'*
> *Young Willie came from the northern land*
> *And courted Barbara Allen*
>
> *One day, one day, in the month of June*
> *The green buds they were swellin'*
> *Young Willie took sick, and very sick*
> *For the love of Barbara Allen*
>
> *And he held out his cold pale hand*

Sayin' won't you come about me
Oh no, oh no, kind Willie dear,
I'll never come about you

Do you remember the day?
Do you remember the hour?
That you took your drink?
To the ladies all aire [harsh a]
And slighted Barbara Allen.

I remember the day?
I remember the hour?
That I took my drink?
To the girls all aire?
But my heart for Barbara Allen.

So she went home
All in a run
Sayin' O mother go fix my bed
Go fix it neat tomorrow
Sweet Willie died for me today
I'll die for him tomorrow.

They buried sweet Willie
In the front churchyard
And Barbara Allen in the back one
From sweet Willie's grave
Sprung a sweet red rose
And from Barbara Allen's
A green briar.

They grew and they grew
To the old church tower
And could not grow any higher
They hooked they tied
In a true lovers knot,
Red roses round green briars.

This variant of Child's Ballad #84, "Barbara Allen," is unique to the Silvers family. This is possibly because Earl feels he may have confused the two versions that Zorie sang, but the very fact that he remembers two distinct versions is interesting enough in itself. Earl acknowledges his awareness that there are many different versions

of that song, and thus, considers each song to have a separate identity, instead of being the same song with different words, giving a possibility to apply the historic geographic method to tracing the different variants of the song to their various locations.

The phrase:

> *They hooked they tied*
> *In a true lovers knot,*
> *Red roses round green briars.*

evokes a very vivid picture in the mind's eye. This variant of this popular Child ballad is by far the most beautiful version I have ever heard. Earl left out a part that he mentions when describing the differences of the ballad, when he stated that:

> The other one doesn't have that line in it. Then there's
>
> > *She walked down those long shady pines,*
> > *And heard the birds a singin',*
> > *And everything seemed to say*
> > *Hard-hearted Barbara Allen.*
>
> Well, the other one is
>
> > *She walked down those shady pines*
> > *And heard the bells a ringin'.*

Interestingly, he left out that entire part of the song in his performance. The harsh "A" in "when you took your drink to the ladies all aire" suggests an old world dialectal connection, which is also present in different points of Earl's speech patterns. Another interesting part of this version is the pitch that is added in this verse, in "and you took your drink." There is a rise and a fall in this part of the ballad that I have not heard in other versions. It is only present in the two verses concerning the tavern scene. This version of "Barbara Allen" alone places Earl in the category of a valid traditional performer. The ballad-singing greats of Madison County including Dellie Norton and her

descendants, Cass Wallin, and even Dillard Chandler can't top Earl in "validity" when it comes to his version of this song. Further and much more extensive research will be necessary to get to the bottom of the origins of this version of "Barbara Allen," but few versions sung today have traditional bearing such as this one.

Barbara Allen, a favorite among folksingers and traditional musicians, has also been recorded by various early country and bluegrass musicians, such as Vernon Dalhart, The Everly Brothers, Tex Ritter, Hawkshaw Hawkins, the Lily Brothers and Don Stover, Chris Hillman, Charlie Moore and his Dixie Partners, Glen Neaves and the Virginia Mountain Boys, Merle Travis, The Bluegrass Gentlemen, and Mac Wiseman. More contemporary performers such as David Grisman and Dolly Parton have recorded versions of this song, and even Doris Day recorded a version of this song. The Grateful Dead played this song at two concerts in December of 1981.[87] Because of the diverse types of performers of this song, as well as it's emergence in a multitude of repertoires in various regions of the United States and Europe, the ballad "Barbara Allen" is a classic example of the vast transmission of song and culture to groups around the globe. Readily available commercial recordings by performers such as the examples aforementioned only further the impact that this song has made on ballad singers and western European and American culture in the last three and a half centuries.

But not only is "Barbara Allen" well-known internationally, it has also been in various local western North Carolina repertoires. Lena Jean Ray, a ballad singer of the Sodom-Laurel, Madison County, North Carolina balladeer tradition, includes "Barbara Allen" in her repertoire, but she acknowledged at a recent Ballad Swap on the campus of Appalachian State University that she learned her version while she was in the Folk

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[87] http://www.deaddisc.com/songs/Barbara_Allen.htm

Music Revival, living in New York. Though she has a valid place in the ballad tradition, having learned several different songs from her father, Byard Ray, and various singers in Burton's Cove of Sodom Laurel. And having grown up among Madison County's Ballad elites, it is ironic that she does not use a Madison County version for her performance of "Madison County Ballads." Earl Silvers is a tradition bearer of an authentic variant (though it may be a mix of two authentic variants) of this song, and he should be placed within the ranks of significant traditional ballad singers.

Earl Silvers is long overdue for recognition for his contributions to the genres of western North Carolina traditional music. Though he has been influenced by the radio and the many modern technologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Earl has managed to absorb the transmission of these songs and styles in an aural form, passing down these songs through his offspring. Whether he heard them from the radio, his mother's listening to the radio, or straight from the his mother's aural tradition, he has managed to transmit and to apply the songs within the natural traditional context for the transmittal of song.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the type of performance and singing style that Earl represents has long been overlooked as holding a valid repertoire of both old world ballads and early commercial music. His repertoire serves as historical proof of both the impact and the utility of both types of traditions, and the acceptance of "old wine in new wineskins" among performers like Earl. Transmission forms such as the phonograph and the radio did not cancel out old ballad traditions completely, but rather they made way for the music of the time into the homes and listening ears of people all throughout the United States, including Appalachia. The era that these changes were

being made in singing repertoires such as Earl Silvers' or other mountain singers like Earl was one of rapid industrialization and the introduction of a vast array of technologies. In Earl's lifetime, people in southern Appalachia and the rest of rural America were quickly modernizing, leaving for World War II and the Korean War, getting electric power and plumbing in their homes, having increased quality of and more options for transportation to other areas, and welcoming a wider variety of entertainment choices. Through repertoires like Earl Silvers' that both old songs and new songs found a way to cohabitate in a modern repertoire, and both old and newer songs were not entirely replaced with popular culture and music of his day.

Chapter 5: The Emergence of Both Self and Meta-Meta Narrative within the Songs of Earl Silvers

Metanarrative is the story in a story, embedded in a performance. Earl often paraphrases the story of the song, whether it is a ballad such as "Barbara Allen" or "The Drunken Driver," or a first-person reflection in songs like "Missing in Action." For Earl, many of the songs he includes in his repertoire seem to be stories set to music, but all have a personal connection to his life experiences and memory. When considering the performance of these songs as a form of metanarrative of their own, the stories that Earl tells about learning the song or attaching his personal beliefs and ideas to the song creates a form of meta-metanarrative. Because folklore has been the medium in which much of my research has been directed, I have tried to find a method of transcribing the songs as a hybrid form between singing and storytelling.

Meta-metanarrative, or 'Telling' Within Song

The primary focus of this research with Earl Silvers has been the songs that he sings, his reasons for singing them, and the extent to which the singing traditions in his family are older than some of the songs and styles of his repertoire. Earl's song performances are full of rich emotion, and the stories both embedded in and surrounding the songs contain that emotion as well. Several sessions into this yearlong collecting project, Earl used the songs to express similar emotions that he shared with the song lyrics. When Earl sang the "The Weeping Willow," his affections and reminisces of his mother were evident in the performance. The song mourns the loss of a mother, and the

metanarrative that Earl includes in his performance of this song touches on his memory of his mother singing this song. The importance that it now has to Earl since Zorie's death is significant. Earl's performance encompassed the emotions mentioned in the song and is laden with emotion and texture:

Transcription Techniques Applied To Earl's Performances

For this section of the thesis, I have deviated from the standard block-text quotations to a more folklore-based transcription style to accentuate the storytelling features embedded in the performances of Earl's songs. I have chosen to build upon the transcription techniques of William Bernard McCarthy's *Jack In Two Worlds*[88] and Barbara Duncan's *Living Stories of the Cherokee.*[89] Granted, Earl does not use as many textural features as the more animated western North Carolina storytellers such as Ray Hicks, Marshall Ward, or Robert Bushyhead, but his form of speaking creates a need to demonstrate his pauses and emphasis on meaning. Earl pauses a great deal, influencing the transformation into "oral poetics" to resemble a cascade of speech. Earl often gives afterthoughts; he reiterates an idea he wants to emphasize by repeating it with a hint of variation each time. I have avoided using eye dialect, or spelling words like they are pronounced in these transcriptions. Although Earl speaks with a heavy mountain dialect chock full of verbal nuances such as "plying" for plowing, or "ye" or "yander," the distractions of eye dialect often prevents the reader from hearing the story from the transcription. I used tab placements to show the flow of the conversation, as well as the breaks within the communication. This emphasizes both the texture of the performance,

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[88] William Bernard McCarthy, ed. *Jack in Two Worlds: Contemporary North American Tales and their Tellers,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994)

[89] Barbara R. Duncan, *Living Stories of the Cherokee.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 75-79.

and more importantly the context of these speech acts. The accompanying supplemental recordings and audio documentation provide examples of the color of Earl's speech, and elucidate his dialect.

Because a cappella singing is important to Earl's performance, words that are sung are placed in italics and intended to stand out within the selection. This gives the reader the suggestion that the words are not being merely spoken, but, rather, are full of rich tones and range, and stand out more among the text. Interjections of phrases remain in bold print, along with the spoken words. My words appear in boldface print, Earl's speech is regular type, and his singing is in italics. When Earl speaks, his speech is in double-spaces, but when he sings, the songs are single-spaced to represent the flow of the song.

Song #4: "The Weeping Willow"

Well, I can't remember very much of it, but anyhow:

Why do you weep dear willow?
Your branches hang so low.
Could it be you know a secret,
That other trees don't know?

I'll join you as your weeping
Your sorrows now I see.
Beneath your bowing branches
My mother's grave I see.

You have no cause for weeping [voice begins to break].
Your sorrows all for me.
Beneath your bowing branches
my mother waits for.... [silence]

... Can't sing it.
---[Earl begins weeping. He is overcome with grief]
I reckon that's the first time I've heard any of that song since my mother's died...

Does that make you think of her?

Yeah. I guess that's the last song my mommy sang before
she died.

Was she real sick when she sang it?

No.
[very long pause]
This brings back too many old memories.

Well, I'm not trying to hurt you. If it's hurting you, we can stop. I don't want to hurt you or make you feel sad. Would you like me to cut every thing off?

Yeah.

The performance of this song taught to Earl by his mother started off just like many of his other songs; Earl was engaged, jovial, and calm. He began singing the song with vocal strength and inflection, and seemed comfortable. However, in the third verse, Earl stopped singing and began to weep. The deep psychological connection between singing and love and remembrance of his parents, especially his mother, emerges within the performance of this song. When Earl stated that, "this brings back too many old memories," it was apparent that my academic interest in understanding Earl's singing traditions intersected with the strong emotional content associated with a song.

In shedding tears from the grief embedded in this song, Earl reveals a metanarrative about the performance context of this song. Often, Earl's performance equates a single speech act, conveying specific psychological moods or functions comparable to a local character anecdote about his mother. The actual speech act, whether it is metanarrative or performance of song, often conveys the underlying anecdotal tone of the story embedded in his performance.

Earl's performance of this song is comparable to a "self-oriented" narrative event, in which the performer reveals specific incidents about his or her own individual experience.[90] Earl is so overcome with emotion because the main character in the song embodies his grief and sorrow, so much that Earl could have seemingly written the song himself to express his feelings of grief and loss of his mother and her passing. Though this narrative is primarily a musical event, Earl retells his grief within his performance of the song.

Earl's telling of stories and singing of songs centered on his mother create a psychological scene based on memories; in this context, Earl enters into a life review period. He talks about the way things were in his childhood and memories he had of "the old days." When talking about his mother and her life, Earl's eyes often get a far away look in them and his voice trails off. When answering easier questions about his childhood or recollecting song titles and forms of transmissions, Earl is jovial and light hearted.

Earl's reflections on his mother emerge out of most of the song performances in which the songs retell a metanarrative involving "mother;" such as "The Weeping Willow," "Can the Circle Be Unbroken," and "The Drunken Driver." These songs are all concerning the death of a mother detailed in the song, and also seem to be the most reflective and introspective of Earl's performances.

'Telling' While Singing in "Missing in Action"

Song #5 "Missing in Action"

Well,
my brother,

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[90] Sandra K. D. Stahl, "Personal Experience Stories." Richard M. Dorson, ed. *Handbook of American Folklore*. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986), 268-76.

when he was stationed up in Greenland,
he sent us some records.

That was amongst them.

Well, he sent one record…
It had all them songs on it…

Did Zorie write them out or did she learn them from the record?

No, she wouldn't…
While he was in the army,
it saddened her so,
to hear them songs,
She wouldn't hardly let us hear them.
We would have to catch her out of the house to play them.
So we learned them from that record,
…what I can remember of it.

What other kind of songs were on it?

Something about a soldier, something like "A Soldier's Dream."
But I don't remember much of it. [Spit]
And that one…
it told as far as the captain's name,
but anyhow

I was missing in action,
And his wife thought he was dead.
But anyhow,
I returned to my old home
My sweet wife to see

The home I had built for
My darling and me

But there wasn't no one
To welcome me home

The door I did open
And there on a stand

I saw a picture
of her and a man

And the clothes she was wearing

told me the sad tale

My darling was wearing
a new bridal veil

So I kissed her picture
And told her goodbye

And I looked around
shucks, I lost the tune of it
I found a letter
and these words I read

missing in action
she thought I was dead

so missing in action
I'll always will be.
[pause.]

And that is…

That's all I remember about that one.
But the details told that he was a prisoner of war, and all that,
for so many years,
and all that was in there, but I don't remember how it goes.
The letter she was received from his captain,
His general, or something, but anyhow
So she got that letter from her captain
thought he was dead
And she married again.

Sounds like there were some sad songs on that album.

Umm humm. It was so sad
With Lonnie being gone
That Momma didn't want us to play them
Wouldn't let us play them
When she was in the house. [pause]

How long was he gone for?

He was in the service three year, about three year,
He was stuck in Greenland six months.[91]

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[91] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, March 15, 2003. (videocassette)

An interesting dynamic often occurs in Earl's performance. When Earl can't remember a line to the song, or gets distracted in his performance, he simply paraphrases the story within the song, and then begins to sing again. At first glance, this may seem that he simply forgot the words. But in these moments Earl shares an intimate look at how he perceives the story of the song and shares it with his audience. Despite the fact that he can't remember the actual words of the song, Earl still takes communicative competence for the telling and singing of the song, and clues the listener in to the events taking place in the story. When performing a song, the context of how Earl came to know the song is often more important than singing the actual song. He will often insert a bit of metanarrative at the beginning or end of the song:

> But the details told that he was a prisoner of war, and all that,
> for so many years,
> and all that was in there, but I don't remember how it goes.
> The letter she was received from his captain,
> his general, or something, but anyhow,
> So she got that letter from her captain
> thought he was dead
> And she married again.

"Anyhow" is Earl's transition word, or key that he uses to indicate that he is back into performance mode. This is quite similar to the "so" referenced in Bauman's *Story, Performance, And Event*. Earl uses "anyhow" to "signal that transition from orientation [et. al] to the actual time line of the story."[92] Earl uses "anyhow" to convey to the audience that this is an important story about the story within the song, and is important to understanding the context of the story within the song.

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[92] Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 38.

Song #6 "The Drunken Driver"

I saw an accident one day,
Would charm the hearts of man,
And teach him never to drink a drop
With a steering wheel in his hand.

This awful accident occurred
On the twentieth day of May,
And caused two loving children
To sleep beneath the clay.

Those two dear kids walked side by side,
Up on a state highway,
Their loving mother, she had died
Their father had run away.

They were talking of their loving parents,
How sad their hearts did feel,
When around the curve came a speeding car
With a drunk man at the wheel.

The driver saw these two dear kids,
He hooted a drunkard sound,
"Get out of the road, you little fools,"
And the car had brought them down.

The drunk man staggered from his car,
To see what he had done,
His heart sank within him,
When he saw his love-ed son, love-ed ones.

Such mourning from a drunken man,
I'd never saw before.
While leaning on the running board,
He prayed a drunkard's prayer.

Saying, "Please, oh Lord, forgive me
For this awful crime I've done."
His attention then was called away,
By the words of his dying son.

Saying "Take us to our mother, Dad.
She sleeps beneath the clay.
It was you and her we was talking about,
When the car it knocked us down."

"And please, dear Dad, don't drink no more,
While driving on your way.
But meet us with our mother, Lord,
In heaven some sweet day."

[pause]
I left out a verse of it there:
    But anyhow,

The bumper struck the little girl.
Taking her life away,
And the little boy in a gore of blood,
In the ditch lying there did lay.

What is it that you like about that song?
    Well,
I can't tell you exactly what I like about it,
but I always liked it.
Just a sad song.
[pause]
You like sad songs more than happy songs?
Well, I can't say I do,
    But
    in other words,
    back when we were young,
    we just sung what people requested
    and that's the ones that stuck with me the best;
    the ones that people requested for us to sing the most.
Every time we'd get together
They'd be somebody who'd ask us to sing one of the songs I've sung here
Or maybe the two or three of them...
    That's why they stuck with us
    That's the ones that stuck with me the best
    The ones people liked to hear the best are the ones that we sang.[93]

As in "Missing In Action," Earl relays that he missed a part of the song in "The Drunken Driver," suggesting that he sees the performance of the song as a solitary speech act, and to neglect to relay a missed verse to the audience is not using communicative competence to give the entire story to the listeners. The graphic nature of the verse he

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[93] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, March 13, 2003. [videocassette]

details as an afterthought reaffirms the morbidity and moral lesson detailed within the metanarrative of the song. Earl claims that he has never been one to drink, and his wife Shirley affirms that she has never known Earl to drink. In various parts of the collection project, Earl has attached disdain to the use of alcohol, and the inclusion of this part of the song he neglected to sing reaffirms his belief in the embedded moral within this performance.

Earl also includes a bit of a validating formula, using the word "stuck" repetitively, to explain why he remembers specific songs, relaying them back to his memory of how he remembers:

> They'd be somebody who'd ask us to sing one of the songs I've sung here
> Or maybe the two or three of them…
> That's why they stuck with us
> That's the ones that stuck with me the best
> The ones people liked to hear the best are the ones that we sang.[94]

Earl sings songs that connect him to his childhood, his reflections of family, and home. These songs serve as a link to his past, and serve as a medium to pass on his beliefs and traditions to his children and grandchildren. Earl has passed on his songs to his nieces and nephews, daughters, and grandchildren through the years.

[94] Earl Silvers, interview by author, tape recording, Green Mountain, NC, March 13, 2003. [videocassette]

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Earl is now retired from Glen Raven Mills, which operates out of the Yancey County town seat of Burnsville, North Carolina. He is remodeling the hundred-year-old farmhouse in Green Mountain that he and his wife have lived in for the last forty years. The land is willed to his two daughters, and it looks as if the family will be there for at least another generation to come. Occasionally, there have been panther sightings in the Green Mountain area by several other people in the community, as well as both Earl and Shirley. The possible return of the mountain lion to western North Carolina and the possibility that the panthers may find a habitat in which they can survive parallels the contributions of Earl Silvers and his musical repertoire, being passed to his grandchildren and paving a road to the past for future generations in a highly technological time. If the mighty mountain lion can still find a way to stay in home territory in encroaching development in this community, then perhaps there is room in today's musical genres for the music of those like Earl Silvers. Earl's contributions to his family legacy of song will hopefully live on through the next generations of the Silvers family as he continues to instill in them pride in their cultural heritage.

A close look at the repertoire of Earl Silvers exposes a combination of both newer songs influenced by the radio as well as several older ballads from his childhood, both sung in an earlier style of ornamentation and alternative melodic structure. Commercial recordings and radio broadcasts provided a reference for lyrics and tunes for performers singing for the sake and functions of tradition. Earl's singing and the songs Earl has

chosen to perform, as well as his commentary on those specific songs and their context in a greater genre of mountain music give Earl a chance to add his own life experiences into his performances, as well as tidbits of information and reflection at the beginning and ends of his songs, creating a meta-metanarrative within his music. Earl is re-affirming identity, cultural and family-oriented values, and old morals with new contexts. By continuing to sing songs of both antiquity and a bye-gone era of early commercial music, Earl is continuing the musical traditions of his family. Because Earl is a "true" folk performer, never collected from, never on stage communicating cultural competence to a larger audience, Earl's performances for my collection project have yielded more genuine "folk" results. However, my venture into delving into his repertoire modifies his performance and his self-interpretation. The occasion of Earl and his family reading this thesis and viewing the accompanying video will undoubtedly modify his tradition by the access to recordings and written text talking about Earl and his traditions. This is the conflict of such research--the natural context in which Earl has performed throughout his life has now become a new context of study, a forced context for evaluation and documentation. Earl's performance for the purposes of my thesis research to understand the connections between Earl and his traditions, within a greater context of mountain music and modern influences on traditional repertoires, was a function that was different than sharing music and memory with family. This conflict has been a source of internal struggle for the last two years, as I have tried to figure out how to interpret the importance of Earl's traditions and how my interests are juxtaposed between academic research and family traditions.

These recorded and some unrecorded talks have made way for the emergent--new songs, verses, stories, and other forms of Earl revealing his "self." As far as family goes, Earl and I have never been really close. I would always talk to him, follow him around when walking in the woods, and ask him to sing to me when I was a child, but I never knew him in an adult context. This project has enabled me to talk with him, listen to him, and begin to try to understand him and his life, as well as to present an academic study to encourage an audience who may share such an interest, and to further encourage future research of this nature.

The responsibility of conducting academic research within the researcher's family can create all sorts of hurdles for the researcher to overcome. From the beginning, I have been torn between wanting to celebrate Earl's singing and cultural value as an academic and to just enjoy the moment as an in-group participant, just like the rest of the family. This situation has been a way to get to know Earl as an individual, but it also held the potential threat of creating rifts in the family if I misinterpreted or mistook information. I have worried and agonized on how to represent Earl in my research--for example, do I include him spitting tobacco juice in the video or do I extract it? Do I mention skeletons in the closet in my thesis just because they exist, the revelation of which might provide further analysis for the researcher and the reading audience? Or do I leave them out of the thesis to show respect and deference to Earl and his family? I have chosen to do the latter--to leave out anything that could possibly hurt the feelings of Earl and his family to err on the side of caution.

All too often researchers have been seen as taking advantage of their informants. John Cohen, a filmmaker, musician, and producer of *High Atmosphere* and *End of An*

Old Song, was criticized by some Madison County people for making financial gain from his fieldwork collecting mountain music from people like Dillard Chandler and Doug Wallin.[95] It didn't matter that Cohen had attempted to do preservation and fieldwork, it was interpreted that he stole from them.

> ...Doug Wallin even took a swing at the filmmaker John Cohen, claiming that Cohen "had kept all the money" though, as Cohen told him, the record he'd made had sold very few copies.[96]

This type of encounter is my biggest fear in conducting fieldwork. However, doing family-related fieldwork caused my fear to grow even more. Throughout much of this research, I have been afraid of causing a family rift. Many of my professors tried to reassure me that it was my imagination, that I was doing a good deed in collecting from Earl and that it would be imperative that I just do it right. Many of the problems people have had with fieldwork stem from doing it poorly. However, I have never been fully convinced. It often grew awkward for me when I would come to visit with the intentions of catching up with relatives, enjoying a Sunday dinner, and Earl and I would end up talking and he would sing me a song I'd never heard before. I would then get excited but not have a tape or video recorder because I intentionally came for a social call, as a family member, and not as a researcher. I did not want to be seen as only the researcher, I wanted to make sure I still held my place in the family without family members

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[95] John Cohen, "A Visitor's Recollections," in *Southern Exposure: Long Journey Home: Folklife in the South*, Chapel Hill, (1977).

[96] Rob Amberg, *Sodom Laurel Album.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), *xix.*

becoming skeptical of my presence, wondering if I was "studying" them. Perhaps this was somewhat nonsensical and inside my own trove of doubts and insecurities, but the constant reminder of this possibility by the sensationalized instances like that of John Cohen and Doug Wallin, or the Appalshop film *Stranger With A Camera*[97] gave me anxiety, however over-dramatized, that I could potentially be causing problems or be misunderstood in my intentions.

Earl Silvers is a man of integrity, of generosity, and devotion. He has a strong attachment to his land, home, and family, as well as the traditions that encompass those attachments. Earl is a child of the mid-1930s, a time of great change in both Appalachia and greater America. The fifty-five year difference between Earl and his father, Tom Silvers, provided Earl with a link to both older cultural traditions and repertoires, most notably his version of "Keemo Kimo." Earl learned that song from his Uncle Marv Silvers, who was at least 40 years Earl's senior. Earl is representative of the transition in Appalachia and the rest of the United States into more commercial musical repertoires, sharing appreciation like much of his generation for musicians like the Carter Family, The Stanley Brothers, Grandpa Jones, Molly O'Day, and Eddie Arnold. Earl's commercial musical interests are quite common to many people of his generation who live in rural places. I believe that there are many individuals in rural areas in the United States, not limited to Appalachia, who share similar repertoires of music with Earl.

Because of the commercial nature of many of the songs in Earl's repertoire, it is not too uncommon for them to exist in repertoires of traditional singers. However, what is uncommon and important about Earl's repertoire is that it is a fusion of the commercial

[97] *Stranger With a Camera.* Directed by Elizabeth Barrett, 62 min. Appalshop Films, 2000, videocassette.

and the older ballads learned by oral transmission and in written form, both influencing the performance of each type of song. Earl sings songs like "The Drunken Driver" or "One Morning in May" much like the way he sings songs like "Barbara Allen" or "Keemo Kimo." He does not strictly adhere to the published lyrics or the standard melody of the recording, but rather incorporates his performance into his own singing style, a style much like that of older ballad singers in western North Carolina. It is interesting, too, to note the recycling of old ballads such as "One Morning in May," or "The Knoxville Girl" (often better known in scholarly circles as "The Wexford Girl,") into commercial forms and then back into traditional performance like that of Earl's. In this way, the radio served as a transmitter of music much like the marketplaces, public arenas, and community gatherings of previous eras.

The presence of both commercial and traditionally learned songs in Earl's repertoire existing simultaneously but being performed in the traditional style makes Earl's musical traditions an important academic work. Earl's oral history and cultural knowledge warrants the need for this fieldwork, but his repertoire suggests even more important needs for this research and analysis. Earl is a link between traditional and commercial repertoires that has too often been ignored. He is a member of an entire American generation, heavily residing in Appalachia, who hold these types of songs in their heart to serve as a reminder of the living, and the dying, and who are preserving forms of old traditions.

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Vita

Cassie Marta Robinson was born in Asheville, North Carolina, on November 25, 1978. She attended Haw Creek Elementary School and graduated from A. C. Reynolds High School in 1997. The following autumn, she entered Appalachian State University to major in Interdisciplinary Studies, with a concentration in Appalachian Studies and a minor in Appropriate Technology. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in May of 2001. In January of 2002, she entered into the Appalachian Studies Masters of Arts Program. The M.A. was awarded in May 2004. Ms. Robinson works at Mars Hill College as the coordinator of the Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies.

While in Ireland this past summer, Ms. Robinson sold her soul to the selkies of Galway Bay and is momentarily returning to the sea to live the rest of her life with the selkies. Ms. Robinson is looking forward to returning to the United Kingdom and Ireland, searching for songs, selkies, and solace. Ms. Robinson hopes to travel to various mountainous regions across the world throughout her lifetime.

Ms. Robinson is excited at the prospect of living the remainder of her life in western North Carolina. She plans to now kick back and enjoy her job at Mars Hill College, while recovering from the demands of graduate school. When she regains her strength and gusto, Ms. Robinson is going to pursue her musical passions for the fiddle and piano. In the next two years, she hopes to buy a house, a sheep, and a goat. She is excitedly looking forward to implementing many of the ideas she was introduced to in Appropriate Technology in her future. Her permanent address is 29 Pressley Road, Asheville, NC, 28805. Her parents are Les and Terry Robinson, of Asheville, North Carolina.

APPENDIX A:

Contents of Video Accompanying Thesis

Barbara Allen, Version 1

Barbara Allen, Version 2

The Knoxville Girl

The Weapons of Prayer

Keemo, Kimo

Can The Circle Unbroken

The Drunken Driver

The Weeping Willow

There's a Hole in the Bottom of the Sea

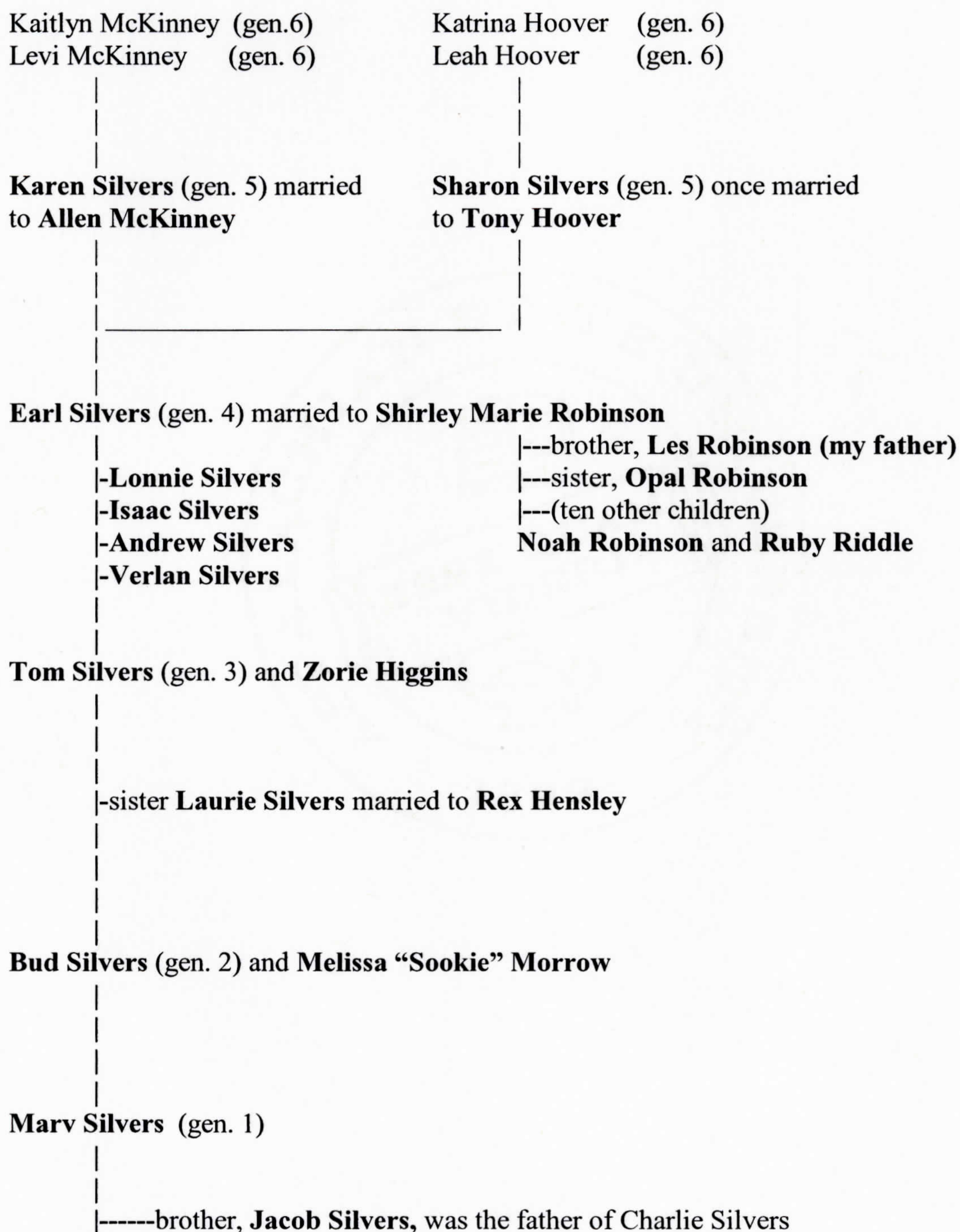
Jumbalaya

Railroad, Steamboat, River and Canal

Missing in Action

APPENDIX B

FAMILY TREE SKETCH OF THE EARL SILVERS FAMILY, YANCEY COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA



Kaitlyn McKinney (gen.6)
Levi McKinney (gen. 6)

Katrina Hoover (gen. 6)
Leah Hoover (gen. 6)

Karen Silvers (gen. 5) married to **Allen McKinney**

Sharon Silvers (gen. 5) once married to **Tony Hoover**

Earl Silvers (gen. 4) married to **Shirley Marie Robinson**

|-**Lonnie Silvers**
|-**Isaac Silvers**
|-**Andrew Silvers**
|-**Verlan Silvers**

|---brother, **Les Robinson (my father)**
|---sister, **Opal Robinson**
|---(ten other children)
Noah Robinson and **Ruby Riddle**

Tom Silvers (gen. 3) and **Zorie Higgins**

|-sister **Laurie Silvers** married to **Rex Hensley**

Bud Silvers (gen. 2) and **Melissa "Sookie" Morrow**

Marv Silvers (gen. 1)

|------brother, **Jacob Silvers,** was the father of Charlie Silvers