

Mullins Family Interview

4/18/98

Blanton: I should say just for the tape's sake that today is the 18th of April 1998 and this is Blanton Owen in Chouteau, Montana talking with Billy Gene Mullins, Scott Mullins, Myrtle Mullins... What's your maiden name? And Annabell Puckett, Mullins Puckett. Get the names right.

Get the names right.

Mullins.

Eat up by Mullins.

Blanton: We're going to talk a little bit about the play deal. The main thing I'm interested in—and whoever wants to talk, fine, and all of you can pitch in—is how did you come about to get involved in this in the first place. It's pretty unusual.

Scott: What do you want to say, dad? Well, we've always been working with—well, for the past several years, I guess, six or eight years, we've been working with Roadside and with Ron, rather.

Blanton: Like how?

Scott: Well, I guess it all happened back at the old Homefest when we started having memorials and stuff. And for years and years, even before I was even singing with the family Ron was getting up and singing and we'd sing together during memorial service, you know, first Sunday in August. So as it became kind of a tradition that the family would, after church service, all the Duttons and the Mullinses and the Shorts would just get together and pick and sing after we'd have dinner on the ground and it just become a tradition. So one thing led to another and we started singing together and we ended up maybe—started going to churches together and Ron started bringing us these

beautiful songs that he'd written. And he said, "Well, I've written these songs for you," and he wanted us to try them and one thing led to another again and here we are, I guess. So we started—we always thought about working on a play together. But we never dreamed that we'd ever do anything like this in our lives. We'd always sung.

Billy Gene: The idea of this has become really meaningful to me to find a niche somewhere in the world for our people. I really wanted—not necessarily our family, but the people that come and settled the land early on to not lose sight of our people regardless of how long ago it was, and even now. Because this memorial that he was talking about—it's more than just a get-together to remember those that have gone. But it's a family reunion. Our cousins, first cousins, second cousins, uncles, aunts and all the relatives and then their families, and some that have been gone since the fifties when the great migration started from our area into Kentucky and Ohio and, let's see, Michigan. So it was really interesting to me. I wanted to be a part of a memory piece of our land and our country and our part of the world.

Blanton: So in that regard, you were just like this with Ron and...

Billy Gene: That's right.

Blanton: That wasn't a great leap for you to...

Billy Gene: No, not really.

Scott: Always been family. He's always just been there at memorials.

Annabell: The only difference between is that we always sung, that it just come natural. But when Ron wanted us to do a play, we was reluctant to do lines, because that was staged. You know, the lines had to be done at a certain time and at a certain place. That was what we was reluctant about.

Scott: The language.

Annabell: The language—speaking lines. But the singing, we didn't care at all to do that, because that was second nature. But we was rather reluctant to start on the lines doing script, because what we do in church is, you know, you do that...

Billy Gene: It comes natural.

Annabell: Naturally.

Scott: You say what you feel right then. It's not something that's memorized, it comes out of here.

Billy Gene: Heartfelt. That's right.

Annabell: But the more he talked to us about it, you know, the more he wrote down—we did the story circles—and that's where the play come out of. But, of course, Ron had it in his mind to begin with. He's one of these that's thinking way out yonder today.

Blanton: What about it, Myrtle?

Myrtle: When I joined in with them, Ron had asked me, I guess, several years before we ever started—we had just kind of started singing together at that time. He looked at me one day and he said, "I'd like for you to join our play." He asked me. And I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I would just like for you to be part of our play." And I said, "Well, I can't do that." And he says, "Yes you can." And so, at that moment, it just went. We never mentioned it or talked about it anymore until he started singing in the churches with us now lately. And then when he started talking about the play, then he said, "We'd like to have some parts in the play." And we sang first. We had a little play first, you know, the one we had first and it was just singing. It was just singing. And I thought I'll never—I could never, ever be able to have a part just because I've been so backward all my life. And I thought, "Could I ever do anything like this?" And I thought about it and I thought about it and I thought, "Well,

maybe I can." So we started with the script and he started giving us these parts. We'd take this home and we'd look at it and read it and I thought, "Can I ever do that? That's too many lines for me to say." So I began to—we read it and read it and then we'd go back and we'd try to practice. We'd talk about it again, and then I thought, "Well, maybe I can." After I got to learn my part, I thought, "Well, maybe I can." So then this started out to be something that I never dreamed would ever happen to me, and it's good. I love it.

Blanton: If it hadn't of been for Ron—if somebody like me had come out of the blue and talked with you guys about doing it do you think you would have done it or was Ron...

Annabell: I think maybe Ron was our...

Yeah, family.

Annabell: He's our leader.

Blanton: You can't not do what a family member asks you. You've got to give it some serious thought.

Myrtle: Yeah, that's true.

Scott: See, if he done us wrong, we'd tell his mommy.

Annabell: We'd tell his mommy. [laughter]

Billy Gene: The material was fascinating to me. You know, the material just hit down home and it was meaningful. You know, that would be about our people, our family. And again, not just the Mullinses, but everybody in our area—in this area, here in Montana, because we're so much alike.

Blanton: Now when Ron was writing these songs and stuff and sort of said, you know, "What do you think of this?" did you guys change them at all or did you ever say, "Well, how about if we do this?" Or did he have them pretty much right from the first?

Scott: Well, I think Ron has each song with each particular voice in mind, you know?

Myrtle: He knew how we stood on it. He knew.

Blanton: And so you didn't have to...

Annabell: We don't have to elaborate on anything that he does, because he knows us so well, I think.

Scott: I guess we had to give it our own style...

Annabell: Our own unique...

Scott: We had to give the song its voice, you know?

Blanton: Yeah, well he knows how you sing so he was able to get the...

Scott: He could start on it.

Myrtle: He would bring a song and say, "This is the melody and this is the key, let's find the key that you can sing in, but this is the melody." So he would start it. And if we could get that, you know...

Blanton: Did he know right then who would be singing...

Yeah.

Annabell: He wrote individual songs for each individual person.

Scott: "That Garden is Growing" is a song that he wrote. He particularly had it with Dad and Mom and Annabell in mind because he wanted that old family sound. You know, the trio, the old type sound.

Blanton: I see. So he's had that...

Billy Gene: I guess there's people gifted with a gift that they can—in their mind—they don't even have to have their eyes closed—I do that a lot myself—'til you can hear all parts of the harmony and the voices even before the song has ever been sang. And Ron has that gift, too. If he wants to hear a tenor, that's what's he's going to do for Scott, alto for Myrtle. He knows how that's going to fit—and a soprano for Annabell and his own voice which is an ultra-high tenor or a good, soft tenor—and my own voice, I'm sure that he picks it out as a base or a baritone. He can hear the music even before we sing it. That's good.

Blanton: Oh yeah. That's essential, I think.

Myrtle: He wrote a song called "The Pilot." Now, it is not in the play. But he brought it to me one Sunday and he said, "This is a song I wrote for you, and this is the way it goes." And when we started it just fit perfectly. But he said, "I had you in mind when I wrote this—"The Pilot." And it's the old Carter family's style singing.

Billy Gene: You know, I've always believed...

Myrtle: With the _____, and he just does _____.

Blanton: I think you guys did that when I was at your house.

Scott: Probably did, yeah.

Billy Gene: I'll always believe he wrote that song for himself as a...

Annabell: As a pilot.

Billy Gene: Yeah, that's exactly right. And I believe that was a vision of himself as a young man up to now. I honestly do, the way the words go. "When I was young and restless I headed out to sea. I didn't need nobody..." You know, just me, that's all I needed. Then he got in trouble when things began to change. And he heard this voice that says, "Hand over the rudder to me." And it tells about the—you're safely through, you know, all this—much more better rhyme than what I'm saying. And then it ends up with a strong, "Hold onto my hand. We'll sail together hand in hand through the breakers crash and roar, safely through the other shore." Strong stuff. That's what took my heart.

Blanton: Well, other than the lines, Myrtle's talked about it maybe being a little difficult at first, has there been anything else about the putting together of this play that's been kind of awkward? [laughter]

Scott: Let's say... I don't know.

Annabell: Learning what he—this part goes with this and there is a break. Then there is a part of the work session and there's a break. The difference in between. You'll see it in the play.

Blanton: Okay, which I haven't seen yet.

Annabell: You haven't seen the play?

Blanton: No.

Annabell: So it has got a segment of the land...

Billy Gene: Every time.

Scott: The different scenes, yeah.

Annabell: The different scenes, and then it starts off with the land. Then we go to the work scene. Then we go to the church. Well, we're in church in between each scene.

Billy Gene: It hinges on the church.

Blanton: Well, that's the heart of this.

Annabell: That's the heart of what we are, because that's what we are.

Blanton: So the transitions between have been tough?

Annabell: The transition—"Amazing Grace" breaks each transition.

Billy Gene: Introduces every segment of it. A different line of "Amazing Grace."

Blanton: I'm curious to see how that works.

Scott: If I can get used to the blocking, the positioning.

Blanton: Where everybody is physically on the stage?

Annabell: Physically on the stage. And see, we've never—we just got up and got in our positions and sang, because I sing on the side of Billy Gene. Myrtle sings on the side of Scott. So that's the way we positioned ourselves in the roster at church.

Blanton: Sure.

Annabell: So the blocking that we had to do to be on stage at a certain place where this person is not, that was rather difficult.

Scott: Certain little things like how you hold your hand, don't look down...

Annabell: See, I'm doing this at all times.

Blanton: Yeah, you're a mover, that's right.

Annabell: I'm a mover. And can you keep your hands still? Well, it's going to be hard.

Scott: Fidgety little kind of stuff that we always do.

Blanton: Yeah, I pick my fingers like this all the time.

Annabell: I talk with my hands.

Billy Gene: I thought I was the only one done that?

Blanton: Oh no, mine are...

Scott: I think generally getting used to the script and getting used to being with an audience. Well, we don't have really a problem being with an audience, but just getting used to this type of audience. We've always been, I guess, singing to...

Billy Gene: Church.

Scott: Church audience, you know. We're not as many secular audiences. But you know, getting kind of used to that. It feels real comfortable now, you know?

Blanton: So you don't have any second thoughts about doing what you do before a different audience all together? A different place, on a stage instead of...

Billy Gene: We have been exposure already actually before we gave it down at Apple Shop. There were 35, maybe 40 college—young people. We wanted to see how that would fit, because you know, the land and the little older people. But you know, every one of them seemed to just grasp that real quick. I was worried about it because I didn't know if I was reaching them or not. And we actually got a standing ovation after it was over.

Blanton: So the worst thing would be if you were performing and you just didn't feel like you were reaching them, that would be pretty tough.

Annabell: That's the hard part.

Billy Gene: That's hard. But you can't quit.

Annabell: If you can pick this person up. Uh uh, [inaudible] but you can pick a person out in the audience and do that to them—sing, or do your lines to that person or to a—this one don't get the response, you do it to another. So actually, doing the play to an audience is easier than doing the play to empty seats. It's easier, because you'll get that feedback.

Blanton: They're like a whole 'nother member of the cast?

Annabell: Uh huh. You get the feedback.

Scott: Well, that's the whole thing of the play. We try to involve everybody in it. It's not just us and them. With enough singing there's going to be everybody up there singing.

Billy Gene: It's a sing-a-long to start with. We invite them to sing on the first three minutes of "Amazing Grace," modern style and as a rule they join right in because everybody knows "Amazing Grace."

Blanton: Well, would you want to do something like this in the future? Or was this a good experiment and you've had fun with and eh, just...

Billy Gene: Well, like I said yesterday, and I know you don't believe me, but we're not getting no younger and I keep telling you that. I don't have a life of hard labor. You know what happened over there? I'm afraid that that might happen again and that's no good. Stuff will go crazy and I'm not there. What are you going to do? My part.

Blanton: So you want to do it hard as you can...

Billy Gene: Yeah, I want to [Inaudible] people. I want to take this thing as far as it'll go if I'm able and capable of doing it. There's nothing would thrill me no better than to be just a tiny part of something beneficial to the area where we live at—in the whole United States for that matter. That we might bring people together one more time.

Blanton: Well, what you do is pretty significant, pretty groundbreaking. This Exchange in this grassroots theater business, the Apple Shop Roadside, they've been messing with for years. It's pretty groundbreaking...

Myrtle: And if you don't like what you do, you won't be doing it.

Annabell: If you don't like it, you can't do it.

Myrtle: Enjoying what you do is important to me.

Annabell: Meeting the people—I'm a people person, of course. But meeting the people so far from home with different cultures but yet, instantly, there was an instant like. You know, you just like them instantly.

Billy Gene: Those folks from Australia...

Myrtle: Like a bond.

Billy Gene: ...bonded immediately. Then the guy from California. Bond immediately. Left wishing us well. Cross-country trucker, all over the United States.

Myrtle: Said he'd been in the mountains of Virginia not long ago, so of course he had to travel 81, that's the only road you can get through.

Blanton: The truck...

Myrtle: The truck could only get through 81 so he passed by.

Annabell: And I told him we was only human, all of us and then he said, "Sure, that's true."

Myrtle: And that guy was from LA and these people are from Australia and we're from Virginia and yet we come together and had breakfast.

Blanton: Pretty amazing.

Billy Gene: Could you imagine what would happen if everybody could come together in that kind of order, in that kind of life, for the embetterment of mankind? It would be a Garden of Eden here on earth if we just allowed it to happen.

Scott: Boy, you're going to start preaching. [laughter]

Annabell: We believe in unity. We're Baptists. Our church is Baptist, but it doesn't make a bit of difference to us.

Billy Gene: No.

Annabell: The denomination is—I don't like that.

Billy Gene: Not even mentioned in the Scriptures.

Blanton: No, it's not.

Annabell: We love brethren. We love the church as a whole.

Billy Gene: That's the reason you know that you got something because you love the brethren. That's the reason. That's all there is. Said, "How do you know you do?" Because I love my brother.

Annabell: We went to Cincinnati with the Black—the northern brotherhood—and instantly we bonded. I mean, there is one of the Black mens, Bob Mullins, and he's our brother. We love him. But we love the Black brother from northern...

Blanton: One thing I'm curious about is the way you guys sing and the way the guys up here sing, it's pretty different. How does that feel? Is that...

Billy Gene: Well, sometimes, you know, you've got to do your own thing. If it sounds harmony... I agree that there's a scale that you have to follow, but that's where the culture exchange comes in.

Scott: That's right. It's how you get to those notes.

Billy Gene: That's exactly right. Now, our family—my dad used to teach shape notes. I guess we already said that one time on an interview. But anyway, that's where all the songs came from and how that we learned to do what we do. And it was a mountain sound. We didn't know no other way. Until I heard, maybe, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on the radio, I didn't know that there was any other... But you see, it's so refined that way. This is just open your mouth and sing in harmony.

Annabell: How I learned to sing is by ear. I never knowed a note of no kind. What come to me was just what God gave me, I guess.

Blanton: Can any of you guys read music now?

Annabell: No.

Billy Gene: Just bits.

Scott: Very little.

Annabell: I can tell where the stops and starts, and we can sing, do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do...

Billy Gene: Right. But it don't do you no good unless you can follow...

Annabell: We don't have that, you know...

Myrtle: Just the pitch is all.

Blanton: Because I got to thinking last night when I was driving home that the Chouteau crowd, the leaders, you know, Myrna for instance, she's a music teacher and it's a literate reading tradition for her. It's not an oral tradition, it's not an ear tradition. And that's really... I got to thinking, boy, I've got to think about that quite a bit here because you guys it's all in the ear, in the brain, in the lungs and the heart. You know, and it's not through the eyes. See what I mean?

Scott: That's all it's ever been.

Annabell: That's all it's ever been.

Myrtle: That's the only way we know.

Annabell: Dad sang the notes and we sang the words. That's how we learned new songs.

Myrtle: He learned music. Daddy knows with the notes and all that. But ours was—we had to find our niche wherever—like the tenor, you have to find where your part fit in, and that's how...

Billy Gene: A blending.

Myrtle: A blending, even if it's not on perfect key or perfect pitch, it is the niche.

Blanton: If it fits, it works.

Myrtle: If it fits, it works.

Scott: Or as little kids, I remember... Well me and Anita and Kevin, I guess, Daddy would just always tell us, he said, "Well, get over here and get your head in here. Get your head in here." And he'd have a guitar and he'd say, "I want you to sing this. Try that." He'd sing the high notes and sometimes it would sound silly and I'd get tickled at him sometimes. He'd try to sing the real high tenor notes or something and he's a real bass. But, you know, that's the way we was taught.

Blanton: I used to go to some sacred harp singings down in Georgia when I worked down in that country. There was a singing teacher, Hugh McGraw, big voice, he could sing all four parts. And he'd be sitting in a square, you know, like they do and he'd be teaching people that had never sung this—the basses and the trebles and whatever. And just as soon as somebody started to falter he would turn and face them and sing their part, just like this. And he could switch that fast and he was such a strong singer, soon as he started singing your part that you were faltering on, boy, you just caught right on to it and you'd go on. It was unreal to watch this guy.

Billy Gene: That's a good way. I hadn't ever thought of it that way, but that would be fine. That would be good.

Blanton: Because he had all four parts.

Myrtle: Well, [inaudible] can sing all parts.

Annabell: [inaudible] can sing all parts, too. But mine is—I do lead in soprano.

Myrtle: Annabell's the leader.

Annabell: I'll just do soprano and cannot harmonize.

Myrtle: See, she can't find the harmony, but she can lead.

Annabell: I cannot find the harmony.

Blanton: See, you're like me. I can't hit a note, number one. I can hear the harmony. I'd like to be able to sing an alto part. That's where my voice is. But I can't hear that. I can hear tenor and a bass just perfect. But I can't sing it.

Myrtle: Alto is low.

Blanton: Yeah. It's lower. It's where I need to be.

Annabell: But Dad says, "You sing." I always sang with Dad. "You sing here." So I sang here. I always sang with Dad.

Scott: Annabell was a born leader.

Myrtle: Her Daddy leads, she leads with her Dad.

Annabell: If Dad sings, I sing. But I have a tendency to overpower. If Scott's leading, see, I overpower everybody.

Billy Gene: No.

Scott: No, that's not true. We sing in funerals or something.

Billy Gene: You can see her voice carries real good.

Myrtle: We change—she leads some and he leads some.

Blanton: You ever sing lead?

Myrtle: I have, but I'm not good at leading.

Blanton: On one of those cuts on that tape, don't you sing lead?

Myrtle: I might have on something. But I'm not a good leader. I want to go low, too low, because I'm trying to find my alto part.

Scott: She's a good leader. She doesn't use it enough.

Myrtle: I'm not a good leader.

Scott: Yes, you are. You do a good job.

Myrtle: Ron and I can sing lead together because he can sing just a little higher than I do. He and I fit together, you know, in leading. Because he can go just a little bit higher than me and we can do pretty good. And Dad. But now I've got so I can't sing with Dad. Dad pitches it just a little too high for me. Dad's just one of those—I mean, you put in on the mark.

Scott: I guess that's where he goes back to the whole organic thing. I guess that's the reason we work with Ron so well because it's just some—it's family. It's in the blood, it's in the tradition, and it just fits. We've sung with a lot of people before. You know, Daddy has sung with people, had other groups and everything and it sounds great, but this is the most, to this point, has been the most real to me. This singing is so much real.

Blanton: Now, who else sings with you? Doesn't Anita sing with you guys some?

Myrtle: She sings, but she didn't want to be part of the play.

Annabell: And Kevin.

Blanton: Did I meet Kevin?

Billy Gene: I guess you did. He's the...

Annabell: He leads, too.

Scott: He sings lead, bass...

Billy Gene: He lives right there above me. I guess he was down there when I had...

Myrtle: He might have been.

Annabell: No, he wasn't there.

Billy Gene: But he's number three son.

Annabell: He's a good singer.

Myrtle: And he's a coal truck driver. That's a hard job.

Blanton: Now, how many kids have you got?

Billy Gene: We've got five. Four boys and a girl. Rick, Kevin... You haven't met Rick, I don't think. He's almost the spitting image of me. And Kevin, just a little bit bigger. And then Wade. Wade and Rick live in Tennessee. And then Scott and Anita. Did I mention them all?

Blanton: Now how many kids do you have?

Annabell: I have two. A daughter, Kathryn—Kathryn Crabtree and a son, Phillip Puckett, and he's an engineer out of Bean Station in Knoxville. He lives in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Blanton: Where's your daughter?

Annabell: My daughter lives in Lyons. She's a farmer's wife.

Billy Gene: Did you tell him he's a railroad engineer?

Annabell: Yeah, he's a... He pulls freight. And he became an engineer when he was 31 years old, which is very unique. That's what he wanted to do.

Blanton: And Scott, you've got one?

Scott: I've got two. I've got one two-and-a-half. His name is Jonathan, and I have one that's, I think, five months old today, Andrew Shane. So two boys.

Billy Gene: The oldest pegged Annabell to the letter.

Scott: Was you around... I think you were around when Andrew was born, or maybe just prior to it. He's five months.

Blanton: Had to have been. I was there in November?

Scott: Yeah. Well, that was about the time he was born.

Myrtle: We went to Cincinnati and we were expecting him not to be there when we got back.

Blanton: Well Scott, do you have any ambitions to go on and do something sort of more professionally with theater or music? Have you thought about that?

Scott: Well, I guess I've done a lot of thinking about it. At this point in my life, me being a father and being a dad and a husband, I want to spend as much time with my family as I can. I think that's the main love in my life right now, other than being a Christian, trying to be a Christian and serving God. I love to get out and meet people. I enjoy doing the work, I hope I'm doing the work right. I'm learning everything—I'm learning new stuff every day. But, you know, I guess it's just kind of a wait and see thing for me. If it feels right and if it's going to be something that I feel is going to do something for me spiritually, it's going to help me, I may pursue it. But I'm not really sure right now. I'm just going to kind of test the water and see how things work out.

Blanton: Just one step at a time?

Scott: Yeah. I think that's... Yeah, I'm going to take today for what it is, you know, and whatever happens tomorrow, let it be.

Billy Gene: You have no control over it anyway.

Scott: There's no control over it, you know.

Blanton: Well, what else should I ask you guys about this deal?

Billy Gene: Looks like we've covered some pretty good ground.

Blanton: Don't want to keep you too long. I just wanted to sort of get an idea, because I hadn't talked to your formally. I just wanted to chat enough to sort of get an idea.

Myrtle: I think you'll like the play.

Blanton: I'm anxious to see it.

Myrtle: It's going to be good. Everybody likes it.

Blanton: Well, I know I like the music.

Myrtle: If we can get it down without goofing up.

Annabell: We hope.

Myrtle: We're so psyched up being up here in Montana, we may make a mistake.

Annabell: We may do boo-boo all over the place.

Blanton: It doesn't make any difference. You know that. Just keep on going.

Annabell: ...Ron and Kim, we've learned a lot from Ron and Kim, and Dudley has really helped us a lot. And Donna is just a perfect friend, Tamara... We want to thank them.

Myrtle: We enjoy being with them.

Annabell: We enjoy being with them. That's our extended family—that Roadside is our extended family.

Billy Gene: Everybody but Donna. [laughter]

Scott: They've all worked so hard to get this thing out and we're so thankful and proud of them that they would see something in this little old family here worth bringing us out here and putting us on the stage.

Blanton: Well, when I was talking to them yesterday, you know, I asked about how it was working. It was a real experiment. They weren't sure when they started how this thing was going to work. They're tickled pink now. They're awful glad they took that step because Ron had it in his mind, but I'm not sure Dudley did, I'm not sure Donna did, but once it started coming together... Is Dudley pretty good to work with?

Billy Gene: To begin with, we thought he was a pure crab. [laughter] But I come to find out that he was working on our behalf and wanting to make the very best out of us that he could make, and I've got a great admiration for Dudley, I really have.

Scott: Because he can push pretty hard when he wants to, when he needs to.

Annabell: What he's doing is molding us. And we've learned how to accept his molding. I believe the acceptance of that took a few sessions, but now we understand what he's doing. You know, he's trying to make us...

Scott: Make it work.

Annabell: And he knows what we don't know. He knows what we don't know and he can see the whole picture where we was just seeing this little part.

Billy Gene: Right.

Blanton: That's the director's job is to see the big picture.

Annabell: The big picture. Our playwright and our director and the people that work with us, we're just thankful for them.

Myrtle: Well, in other words, we're proud of them.

Blanton: I'll pass that on.

Billy Gene: What happened first, we started learning our parts and really not looking at the big picture. Then afterwards it started coming together after we knew the parts, you know, we're going to do this part, you say this part. But somehow or another you were dwelling on what you were fixing to say and not the whole picture of what was taking place. And when it did come together, it was real exciting. You can see it for yourself. One step at a time and everyone—maybe that you'd climb to a peak and then you'd, down, and then you'd come back up all the way to the peak again and then you go down and then you end up on a grand final. And that's good.

Scott: That was a real learning experience.

Annabell: It was a learning experience.

Scott: To see the whole play as a whole instead of just your part.

Annabell: And then when you got it down, then you could see the whole picture and it really fits.

Blanton: Have you ever seen the play? Has anybody like videotaped it?

Annabell: No, we've not seen ourselves. We'd love to do that. We'd like to see that.

Blanton: Boy, that'll make you quit. [laughter]

Billy Gene: Expressions.

Annabell: The expressions and this movement of mine.

Myrtle: I don't like no movie of me.

Scott: I don't even like to hear myself on the tape.

Annabell: I don't like the tape. I don't even play my own albums.

Myrtle: If other people out there like it, well and good, but don't tape me.

Blanton: Well, you know, people have been talking about this going back to the old traditions and the old way of life. People have been presenting those traditions to the bigger public with CD's and movies and videos and stuff, and theatre, except for the Apple Shop, they're pretty different. Does it work for you guys? I mean, is that a good way to present the tradition.

Billy Gene: I can get involved. I can see people getting involved, too. And I like to study. You know, like we was talking about not being sure. And then the end results being rewarding, if no more than just a smile.

Blanton: Just like you were saying earlier about the audience. Once the audience clicks...

SIDE B

Blanton: You were saying it good, now you've lost it.

Scott: Well anyway, I don't think anything that we've ever tried to put on tape, or we tried to record, would ever match what would be done—you know, the quality of what we done live or in front of a public audience. I think it's always been our best work, I guess.

Blanton: Either church or...

Scott: Either church or a secular audience, a theater audience.

Blanton: So live is just the best way?

Scott: I think that's the only way that we know.

Annabell: There is no plastic about it. It has to be real. There is no fake. You cannot fake the stage live. You do it real or not at all. So a film can be stopped and started and stopped and started. Well, you don't stop and start on the stage. It has to be real. So, like I said, virtual reality—I don't even like that word. I like reality. I don't like a virtual anything. I wanted the real thing.

Scott: And I think Ron made it that way, fixed it that way to where it just felt like—well, to me it feels like we're just going on stage to sing a bunch of songs. So it feels comfortable. It doesn't really feel like anything you'd go to see in theater, from my point of view. To me it's just like going in church somewhere and singing. So I guess that's the way we do. We just go and sing and we see what happens, do what we do.

Blanton: Okay. Well, I appreciate it. Thank you guys for taking the time.