

Interview with David and Clarke

Interview with David and Clarke Lee, 2-15-97

Home of David and Cathy Lee, Hoboken

Interviewed by Laurie Sommers for the S. Georgia Folklife Project

Tape 1

(discussion of microphones, recorders)

075 background info.

093 the Lees, as far back as I know, it goes back to John Lee...That would have been in middle 1800s. Grandpa Raymond was born on Billy's Island, and they came off when he was two years old. Grandpa John, and we know he sung, and grandpa Raymond, and Granddaddy Frank, and Frank's brother Silas was the song leader around her. And from Frank was my daddy and Julie's daddy, and then it's down to us and down to our children. And we tell this because we're proud of it, that our children our sixth generation sacred harp singers that we know of.

137 discusses line of succession, explains family relationships

David and Clarke 5th cousins, but Clarke married David's first cousin. David and Clarke raised across creek from one another. Walter Clarke's great grandpa, Raymond David's great grandpa. Granddaddy's were first cousins.

188 The lees is the one that have been a strong family in singing sacred harp for all these decades. This a community, county wide, region wide thing. Extended all around Brantley, Pierce, Ware Co. ...

207 Uncle Silas went all over.

215 Demise of tradition, factionalism in church.

233 We just didn't want to see it die. I'd like to see us make one last effort...So that's where we're at now. (died in late 80s. By 1990 it was gone) Nobody would get together to sing. When we was growing up...They was going because they had to, there was no fervor. No excitement, no pleasure in it. It was a family duty of some time. It was late than that. It's been about 5 years since it really got bad.

264 Sacred harp singing here became a function of the Primitive Baptist church, which isolated it from everybody else. They were the only ones left singing it. Missionaries and Methodists quit. ...And it really became known as Primitive Baptist. (we saw that happen) (David b. 11-25-1954/ Clarke 12-28-1956).

290 sings at peoples' homes and community sings. They just put the word out around town. Most of the time you get there about dark and the sing would start. Of course the women would have cakes and pies and cookies, coffees, and before the decline we'd sing until midnight or after. When the decline came, it got to where they's going home earlier

Interview with David and Clarke

or earlier (9:00). Decline started in early 70s. That when Prescott sing started going down, quit singing at Lee reunion every year. (since that time other denominations stopped singing, their youngins don't know how.

334 It's not considered part of mainstream community life around here like it used to be. At one time everybody knew about it. ...It's becoming unknown because they're not taking their youngins to it.

350 Prescotts had a family reunion every year. They lived down by Winnaker?, close to Charlton Co. South 301, they lived off in the woods. It was a two day reunion, and on Sat. night they always had a sacred harp sing. And so everyone was invited. ..Uncle Wilson, his mama was a Prescott, he always led that sing.. That was the first time I took my wife out, just me and her, was to that Prescott sing.

370 Lee family reunion. We never invited anybody from outside. We didn't need em. Raymond Lee had 21 children. A lot of them had a bunch of youngins. This Lee reunion got to be a pretty big thing...At the Lee reunion, it was a one-day reunion. After dinner, Uncle Raymond would go to singing, and he'd draw everyone around the dining room table. Then got crowded and we'd go out on carport and sing. Last few years dwindled down, everybody got shunning one another. That's what's a shame. Lee's have good singers. I would put this bunch up against any bunch. But they've all got divided so now they won't sing together. Others got frustrated and quit. I don't believe grandpa Raymond would have let it come to this if he'd been alive. Uncle Silas, the main leader around here, from 21 (first singing school), led from then until he was in 50s or 60s. He was 55 or 56 when he turned it over to Uncle Wilson. Uncle Wilson married sister to mine and Julie's daddy, Aunt Ruth. He lead and he turned it over to Clarke. Uncle Wilson's still living too.

(blender in background)

427 Up until last few years have had a single song leader lead. Clarke pitched them all and walked time to them all.

436 selection of song leader He'd start weeding us out. It finally come down to me and Clarke. We feel like the Lord is the one who prepares these ways.. when it comes down to me and Clarke, what happened is we didn't have no bass. I was a bass singer, and Clarke a treble. I wound up in bass section and Clarke the leader. (end blender)

464 That's how every leader's been chosen. Just that random.

Johnny Lee (David's father) taught singing school for a while. Taught while all of us come along.

479 Song leader "You need someone that's got a voice that can be heard. A leader's voice. it have to be a man. And be able to pitch songs. We pitch all of our songs in the key of convenience. And it have to be someone that could mark time, that was a

Interview with David and Clarke

respected person. Some qualifications. It wouldn't matter about the family name, although in the south land, the first thing somebody would ask you is who's your folks.

498 Church affiliation had more to do with it in later years. PB only one to pick from (resume blender) Could call on him to come into our homes or churches. Help lead at a funeral.

523 That's what's impt. now. We're trying to bring new people in and old ones back. Typically that wouldn't have been done. Now we made this change Nov. of 95. Oct. of 95, wasn't that when we went to Mt. Calvary? Might have been Sept. Around here we got to when we would only sing in a few people's house, or at cafeteria in Hoboken. Nobody wanted to go.

537 June of 94 is when we went outside for the first time and went to Tallahassee and sung with them people. And got our eyes opened to what sacred harp could be. And reminded us of what it used to be. So it took us from June of 94 to summer of 95 when Clarke said, that's it. He'd fought em long enough.

544 We went to a Missionary Baptist church. By this time both of us had been throwed out of PB church. We was participating in religious societies. I got Clarke to go with me to this Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist church over here, and we had a sing. ...I wanted to come a whole new route. Went to Mt. Calvary, newspaper man wrote us a good article. What I got out of that was some PR for sacred harp sing, and in one shot I showed everyone that sacred harp was no longer bound up in this assoc. of PB. It was turned loose like it used to be. Sing at First Baptist in Blackshear. Nov. of 95 went to Hoboken and had first sing in Hoboken under this new way of doing it. Still walk time some of time, and still teach walking time, still pitch the same way, and call the songs the same way, and use a lot of the same tempos depending on what the leader wants, but we've gone to this way of doing it because it involves more of the people in this tradition, and gives it more chance to experience the music than it used to. Used to people did it because they wanted the fellowship, now they do it because they want to sing.

586 New way of doing it came from Alabama.

Tallahassee June 94. Samson, AL July 94. Panama City, FL in Dec. of 95. Then we went to Baymonette, Al (?) over by Mobile in Jan. of 95, Then we went to Atlanta to GA state convention, which is a Denson Book sing in March of 95, then we went to Illam Church? fourth weekend of 95, then to Madson? (Ozark, AL) and sung with Dewey Williams, the Wiregrass singers, that's the black singers over there, we was at a white person's sing but Dewey came and sung with us, and his daughter did. Then we went to lafayette, Al ?which is above Columbus, GA in May, then Tallahassee, then we've been to more and more. Chicago, Birmingham, Ft. Paine...This is what we were used to, this is what we've been missing. To go to these sacred harp sings.

612 (in this area) We sung every weekend and most weeks. That you could go somewhere and sing. Esp. me and Clarke. There weren't a week went by that we weren't

Interview with David and Clarke

singing. And we were either at a sing somewhere, or we were at church singing, or we were at someone's house singing, or we on the road between some of them places and we were singing as we was riding along.

620 Clarke: An explanation, we both joined the church when we was 17, he was single until he was 27? We both joined High Bluff. So we was raised up like brothers to start with, we was brothers in the church, and we went everywhere and done everything practically together till he got married. (Clarke waited to get married, Julie born in 64)

640 We had no music training of no kind. (nothing in school, music class in elementary school)

647 Never heard other kinds of music until recently. Except a few old songs, You are My Sunshine, daddy used to sing that, and some of them youngen songs we learned like On Top of Old Smokey and a few songs like that. But mostly we wouldn't sing those because that was frowned on. It was more than secular it was irreverent. Your singing voice was a gift that you was given, you ought to use it for the right purpose to sing praises to the lord and not to sing no hoe-down.

662 didn't hear unaccompanied ballads. Only kind of singing music that we were in contact with was group singing like this without accompaniment. We didn't have radio or TV. And we didn't go to no entertainment of any kind. Against our religion. Bought a TV 6 months ago for first time in our lives. It's just for the videos of the sings. We rent a movie to watch with youngins. But that's only since I got throwed out of church. I never would have had one. But I guess now I'm turning to all kinds of sinful things.

683

check no. 506, Little Orphan Girl, different tune than in the book.

Begin discussion of Hoboken style.

We're the only ones that ornament. Two places that it comes from. We sing a lot without the songbook. ...All these other singers sing with songbook. I would say, in a ratio, that for every one hour we sing singing with the notebook...Out of

699 end of Tape 1.

Tape 2

011 We sing without the notebook 90% of the time. 10 % of our time would be with the notebook. That's one reason we ornament--we forgot the notes. We change the song because we weren't looking at the notes. that included singing in the meeting house, when we sung w/o a notebook, and we went to church every weekend, Sat. and Sunday...And then a lot of our singing between time would be w/o the notebook. The

Interview with David and Clarke

other thing that makes a difference in our style of singing is that we copy the singers from before us. I don't have any way to prove this, ...in my singing today, if there was any way to know it, you'd probably find some remnants, some tag of how grandpa John sung. Cause there was probably some little way that he sung a particular song that the next generation picked up. so my singing today is a mishmash of how all them that went before me sang. Now I copy granddaddy the most, granddaddy Frank, but I sung around granddaddy a lot. Me and Clarke we was around granddaddy. But there's a lot I can hear where I copy uncle Silas. I can't sing like him, but I know I'm copying him. Copying Uncle Barney in a few places. So its kind of a an oral history or something, that if you could take my style of singing and Clarke's the same way, Clarke's heard all these people sing. So we copy those plus we add touches of our own....So that's were I think a lot of this ornamentation comes from.

073 Clarke--that and one other thing: time.

Tempo, yeah.. We sang in the meeting house at a much slower tempo. And that's another difference that we found that we sing so much slower than everyone else in the sacred harp world. We sped up a lot now.

092 You add those extra notes on purpose, because it'd be might spare and dry w/o it. So you get a whole different tune out of it. It's to the point, if we jump, if we to jump from the note sol the 5th note, to fa the first note, you wouldn't just jump directly from one note to the next... I think the page is restrictive....you can use that as a guide. The notes in that book is like a skeleton. When you have a complete skeleton you still don't have a person. And when you got just them notes you still don't have a song. You got to flesh it out...And I think that's where that ornamentation is. We put that stuff in automatically and do it all the time...\

140 Clarke, also the pace that you sing everywhere else, you don't have time to, like we were taught, to transition from one note to the next.

LKS is that taught in singing schools?

146 Clarke, No, not particular taught, individually Uncle Wilson would have told us, you don't just go from here to here, you make your way there.

He would have told us, he would have demonstrated. Here's how he would do that, just like when we pitch a song, if I was going to pitch that 5th note, we'd climb to it...(demonstrates) Learned that its the third (of the chord) we use in pitching the minor.

175 I try to ask them about ending a phrase--the abrupt way of breaking.. David can't explain it, but Cathy has noticed it, someone from Ohio noticed and ask about it.

I'll tell you where that comes from. In the meeting house, the preacher lines the song. Line two and sing two. Generally you start and stop together. Roy Beverly does that, he stops so hard his whole body jerks. ...See we're not counting time in the church house.

Interview with David and Clarke

We're singing by some inner time but its not something you can measure with a metronome or beat. And we've learned how long our people holds each particular note. ...I know what you're talking about it now. (Cathy, it's a punch). Actually, we kind of swell the note at the end and then (smack). You don't just fade out.

Clarke: we do it without realizing it because we do it at church.

243 Cathy When you and Clarke and Philip do it, and it's one of those good rocking songs and you've got a lot of power, that's were you all will do it the strongest. ...It's not just the last note. It's the end of the phrases.

David: that's generally on notes we're not holding according to time. Generally in the meeting house we're singing mostly according to time. Mostly, the last note, end of phrase and song, is not sung according to time, it's sung according to feel. ...A two beat note we'll hold for 4 beats, or fractions of beats. Yet everybody in the meeting house knows and ends it more or less together.

Did different families have different styles?

284 Yes, not still the case. Not many singers left. Have to sing pretty regular to maintain a style of singing. Even though there's still some. You can go to Bennettite side of the Alabaha...Split in 1870 or 71. Ruben Crawford was one side, and Richard Bennett was the other side of the split. Who we sing with, in fact go to church with them now some. They sing some of the same tunes, but they have a different style.

What about the Chesser family? Come to the sing?

They're just about gone. They've got so far, they don't sing it sacred harp style as much as we do. See they also sing conventional missionary songs. I think they've kind of drifted to one side of this.

LKS generally have instruments don't they?

318 Reason they have them instruments and the reason they have choirs is because they quit teaching their youngins how to sing. So they have to have somebody to have the music. They've actually weakened themselves, if they'd taught their youngins how to sing out of sacred harp book they'd have a church house full of people who could sing and they wouldn't need the choir or the piano.

328 Clarke, a lot of those people that can sing they took chorus in school

David, people's that is musically inclined is all that's left. But we've got people that isn't musically inclined, me and him never went to music school, like you did, you went and learned about music...I'm interested in sacred harp. I like some other kinds of music. Sometimes that boy (his son) picks a guitar and I like to listen to that, and just a thing or

Interview with David and Clarke

two like that. But I don't go to concerts because I just don't care that much about them. I don't listen to the radio primarily because I just don't care that much about it. Now sacred harp singing, I like to listen to it and sing it...

Always sung three voices?

345 Three voices is all we had. They never had the alto. Now here's where that come from. In Uncle Silas's early days, and in Martin Dowling's day, they used the BF White book which was written in three parts. Only in three parts. The alto wasn't added until the turn of the century or so. Or after. There were two revisions of that BF White book. One was Joe James, and the other was JL White, BF White's son. We started using that JL White edition, and it had 4 parts. After him came Cooper (for us), Cooper revised the BF White book. Then 1930s or so when Densen's did a revision of the Joe James book and so, When Uncle Silas was there when they made the transition. Because they'd always sung in three parts, they had no one who sung in 4 part, the alto part. They weren't musically trained enough down here to know how. There weren't much education in these parts. This was mostly a farming for groceries. They raised their groceries. They weren't really big row crop farmers. I know I guess three women that sung --Julie's mama's mama, Sara Peacock, is an alto singer and a bass singer. And her sister Lottie would sing alto some, and my granddaddy Frank's sister Lottie would sing alto on just a few songs.

387 Why would you need education to sing alto? What about singing school?

I guess they had no inkling or desire to stretch their wings. There was no push to expand their horizons.

Some places it was controversial?

392 We've always liked it. We've always enjoyed the sound of the alto. In Nov. of 95 when we started this new way of doing sacred harp, we arranged an alto section. So now we have an alto section.

396 Clarke, we had never really heard an alto added to singing until we went to Tallahassee for the first time. (a full alto section)

It was always three part harmony, in the meeting house and everything. There's few songs that Aunt Lottie'd sing the alto too, a few Grandma Sarah, very few songs. We always sung in three parts. Our square was arranged so we had two sets of tenors sitting across from each other, then we had treble and bass across from each other.

Now using Cooper ed. and using tunebook all the time?

415 No, let me straighten that up. We've been using the Cooper book since the 1930s. Any time we're at a sing, an announced sing, we would always use the notebook. But we did so much singing at times we weren't at a sing. We'd be singing at somebody's house

Interview with David and Clarke

and just sit around visiting, and just get out the books and sing a little. Most of the time we'd get out the hymn book, not the notebook. We'd get out the notebook some of the time.

When we were at church it was always wordbook singing then, and we did a lot visiting back and too. And a lot of cases just sing the words by heart.

429 Clarke, we sung for our supper a lot of times. We'd go to church and then go home from somebody from church. A lot of times it'd be older widder women that'd be cooking, and they'd tell us we'd have to sing so we could eat supper.

David, so we'd sit in the kitchen and sing, and they'd fix us such a supper it's a wonder we can get in the door. (Clarke, laughs, you can tell)

LKS Did anyone write a text? Songs

438 Songs? No, nobody wrote any songs, that'd have been wicked.

Words for an established melody?

There was people that wrote words, but not for singing. No. There were a few people-- Because, the attitude is (442) that these books were handed down from above so they were sacred things. So you were careful with those books. You wouldn't change or alter anything in those books any more than you would the Bible. so we were just as protective.

Tunebooks and hymnbooks?

Yes. Over the years I've wrote things, daddy's wrote things, grandma lee has wrote things, poems that would sing. But we wouldn't dream of doing that. That would be writing new words, and that'd be like writing a new chapter to the Bible and asking them to read it at church.

458 Are new tunebooks frowned upon?

No, we sung out of the Casey book. Uncle Wilson found a Temple Star and that's a seven shape book. I can't remember any other--I reckon the Casey book was the only one, the Good Old Songs I'm talking about. Temple Star.

Clarke, there was one or two Southern Harmonies around.

And that was OK?

On occasion. Certain songs, because we use those tunes. You didn't get the Southern Harmony book out and sing out of it, no. But there were a few tunes that we use that were in the southern harmony book. A few people brought the SH book. But they didn't bring it to the sing. And we wouldn't sing out of it. And the Casey book the same way.

Interview with David and Clarke

We used the words out of it. We couldn't read the tune because it's in seven shape. In the last six months I've learned to read a little seven note. In that's few months me and Clarke's got this Old School Hymnal and so we like to sing--of course we're thrown out of church now, we can sing anything we want to.

484 end Tape 2

Tape 3

008 If we were at an announced sing the only book used there would have been the Cooper book and before that the BF White.

035 Clarke, sometimes after the sing...See, all our life we only had the Cooper edition. But we learned tunes out of the old BF White book from our parents singing. At the end of the sing we would sing some of the songs that come out of the old BF White book that were not in this Cooper edition.

David: those old books was about shot and you couldn't get them any more, so they made some copies. I'm talking about photocopies of those songs that we sung that come out of that old book. Now we sung out of this red book, the Denson book, whenever they couldn't get the White book no more, and they had to come up with another book. Uncle Silas was there during that transition. And they got some of these red books, but they couldn't get very many of them. Then some woman came back from somewhere and she found this blue book. They could get them. By then, a lot of people had this red book also. I remember going to sings where they would call out both page numbers. There's a lot of songs in both books. When Uncle Silas was leading. Blue book was the primary book, could get so many of them, the most popular. Red books were mostly gone by middle to late 60s. Mama's got here old red book. There's a couple songs we sing out of red book that's not in the blue book.

101 Would people before turn of century known how to read?

123 David: not everyone could read because they were lining out hymns. A lot of people even today sing strictly by heart.

Clarke That includes the leader.

149 Since '95, if different families had different styles of singing, now you're trying to bring back the singing, how would you describe the style or sound you're getting? Does it sound different, similar, compare to earlier?

166 It is different. In the first place we've added an alto section. We've sped up some on all the songs, and particularly on certain songs. Because we have, we're louder than we used to be, we're pitching em higher than we used to,

Why is that?

Interview with David and Clarke

176 That's exposure to Alabama. We're losing our Hoboken voice, I think, and it's changing into something from somewhere else. My point though, is we were losing it anyway, it was gone. People have told us, don't change, don't change a thing. Well, the alternative is to bury it then because it's dead. So we would rather give up our identity and turn into somebody else than just go away. So we're changing.

187 In singing school, will you try to teach them some of these things you've described, ornaments...?

193 Yes, we'll teach them how to walk time, and we'll teach em how to pitch like we do. See, this ornamentation, you don't teach that. They never told us that. That's just something you hear.

204 This song, 73 on the top, if we sung this by the book, it would be "Show pity Lord.. That's singing it exactly by the notes. Here's how Uncle Silas sings that song, in the meeting house, not in the sing: (demonstrates) (Clarke sings treble, David tenor). There's a couple places where I realize I'm doing it different than Uncle Silas, first half exactly like Uncle Silas though. So when you get to the sing, you get a mixture of that. So at the sing:so I'm still ornamenting so I'm singing it according to time. So at Hoboken if we're working with someone that is real good, and there's several that we are working with, we wouldn't say to him, (ornaments) we wouldn't tell him, but he would hear me. That's the way we learned.

149 Since '95, if different families had different styles of singing, now you're trying to bring back the singing, how would you describe the style or sound you're getting? Does it sound different, similar, compare to earlier?

166 It is different. In the first place we've added an alto section. We've sped up some on all the songs, and particularly on certain songs. Because we have, we're louder than we used to be, we're pitching em higher than we used to,

Why is that?

176 That's exposure to Alabama. We're losing our Hoboken voice, I think, and it's changing into something from somewhere else. My point though, is we were losing it anyway, it was gone. People have told us, don't change, don't change a thing. Well, the alternative is to bury it then because it's dead. So we would rather give up our identity and turn into somebody else than just go away. So we're changing.

187 In singing school, will you try to teach them some of these things you've described, ornaments...?

193 Yes, we'll teach them how to walk time, and we'll teach em how to pitch like we do. See, this ornamentation, you don't teach that. They never told us that. That's just something you hear.

Interview with David and Clarke

204 This song, 73 on the top, if we sung this by the book, it would be "Show pity Lord.. That's singing it exactly by the notes. Here's how Uncle Silas sings that song, in the meeting house, not in the sing: (demonstrates) (Clarke sings treble, David tenor). There's a couple places where I realize I'm doing it different than Uncle Silas, first half exactly like Uncle Silas though. So when you get to the sing, you get a mixture of that. So at the sing:so I'm still ornamenting so I'm singing it according to time. So at Hoboken if we're working with someone that is real good, and there's several that we are working with, we wouldn't say to him, (ornaments) we wouldn't tell him, but he would hear me. That's the way we learned.

260 LKS what if we had a group of Lees, would I hear something different than I would hear at the sing?

268 If we were just singing out of the hymnbook, we'd sing it softer and slower and lower than we would if we were at the sing, it would sound different.

How long have you been doing your recordings? Have you recorded the Hoboken sound?

279 Earliest tape I have is Uncle Eddie's 40th birthday, its like 75 or 6? (Johnny's next younger brother) There's three or 4 tapes from those time period. on cassette. I'd be glad to share those with you.

306 I don't think that anything that's alive ever stops growing and changing. This sacred harp is a living tradition. And because it's a living tradition it's going to change and evolve. We're living one, a tradition that reaches back for us, for our little part of it, into the middle 1800s. This tradition is rooted in Europe, 15th or 16th century Europe. It's not anything like it was in the 1500s, and not anything like it was in the 1800s, and its not anything like it was in the early 1900s. now what happened was there's a few people that want to stop time, and you can't do that. That's what happened to our sing. We tried to go ahead, and there was this struggle. You have to move ahead, because the alternative is to die. I don't feel like we're loosing anything. Hoboken is changing its voice. Now we still walk time to some of our songs. Our people down here are accustomed to that. We also have certain tempos and certain ways that we sing particular songs, and we understand how we do that. I think Hoboken still has a voice, but I think that voice is different than it was 20 years ago. I regret that. the sentimentalist in that regrets that. But on a more practical level, I want to see this tradition continue. And if I don't try to help it thrive and survive, if we ail depend on someone else to do it, it doesn't get done.

350 How do you feel its going? How would you assess what you've done?

The biggest measure for me is that my children now have an active participatory interest in singing sacred harp that they didn't have two or three years ago. And that is probably the biggest thing for me. I wanted them to have what I had. I wanted them to grow up in a sacred harp singing family, in a house that sang sacred harp, going to these sacred harp sings. You learn more from music than just how to pitch your voice. You learn how to

Interview with David and Clarke

stroke and involve your emotions. There's sometimes when singing relaxes you, excites you.... then when you add the text, there's a lot of comfort. I believe what's in the words, I live that, that's my faith. Spiritual part is what I'm trying to say. And those are the kind of lessons that I want to pass on to my children. Because those were the ones that were handed to me. Those were the ones that were handed to my daddy. ...And because this tradition is unique to us, and I want to protect it, I don't want it to die. Some people look at it as a hobby, but to me its a way of life. (Clarke, yeah, it is) I understand that it won't be a way of life to everybody, but it is to me, to us. So that 's why we try to protect it and nourish it as much as we can.

386 Do you sing as a family now? Which was not happening?

Before ,it was something that daddy did at church. And there was a lot of dissatisfaction because of the problems. Hard feelings, and ill will, esp. in the Lee family. Now, they went to sings with us, they were around the singing, but they didn't participate to the degree they do now. They all three know how to walk time, Bryant sings bass, Rachel sings alto, and Hannah's a tenor singer and she is a true tenor singer. They understand, they know the notes, the rests, keeping time, Since Nov. of 95 they've picked up a lot. I've done the right thing for them. And that's my measure. And beyond that, people that used to come to the sings years a go and they quit are coming back. And that's another measure of success. I think it's done real well. It's at a very tender and delicate moment. Because it wouldn't take much for those people who've been coming back--November of 95 that's just a year and two months. That's not long to build a tradition. We're trying to rebuild a trad. It needs to go on for 15 or 20 years. In this new way. Right now it wouldn't take much to tear it down.

426 attendance at sings mostly people from Hoboken?

Practically all of them from Hoboken area.

What percent would have been those coming back?

Well over half of them. (Clarke, 90%) Who was it besides us that use to come?
Clarke--your family and my family, your daddy and momma, my momma, Tollie, that's about it.

David: that's about all that was coming with any regularity two years ago that's still coming today. Now two years ago when we had a sing we'd a had 50-80 people. None of those people are coming now except the ones we just named.

This has to do with church divisions?

yes.

Are they singing sacred harp still?

Interview with David and Clarke

Yeah, they have a sing occasionally. But nobody's invited. They certainly wouldn't let us come. And they wouldn't want you in there either. That's why we come out of it. We wanted to share it with everybody, but they still haven't come to that point yet. So nobody would be welcome except their group. We could go back, but we'd have to give up everything that we've done and stood for. ..But its too big a price to pay.

465 discuss singing sacred harp at gravesite lately. Dean Lee funeral recently. H

He asked for Bitter Cup. One thing we did at Dean's funeral that you rarely see is we sung the notes. Most time we don't sing the notes. We sing just the words. Tollie wanted to do that--only one verse to song. 10 or 12 singers there. Fairly common to have singing at graveside in our family.

500 What about weddings?

Yeah, we got called on to do one in the service. I didn't like it. After more common. When leaving house. Or sometimes during service. I seen sacred harp sung at wakes when they're just sitting around. Ed Thrift a request. He said he wanted them singing around his casket.

520 Clarke, and around here there's a tradition. A lot of times they'll bring the body home, they won't leave it at the funeral home. The last night before the funeral they'll bring the body home. (is that the wake?)

Yeah, I don't know where they got the term.

LKS it's Irish.

Setting up? Stay awake all night.

David: We didn't use that term wake. That's a general term. Before they had undertakers they had to prepare the body themselves. They put em out on a cooling board, built the casket , and then they buried them. They did that as fast as they could because there was no method of preserving them. In 24 hours or so they'd have them buried. I'm told they had the funeral two three or four months later when the preacher could get by there. He may live 50 miles away. Because they were at home, that's were that come from. When they had undertakers and had a way to embalm people, they'd embalm them and bring them right back home.

Singing when at home?

yes.

Term for that period?

Interview with David and Clarke

Bring the body home... I never really heard a term for it, other than wake, but that was from reading the newspapers that we learned that.

558 Other settings for singing?

Never for performance.

LKS Baptisms?

Baptisms always had sings because that was a church function. it would always be something to do with a religious or a, religious isn't the right word, something really important.

Anniversaries?

569 Well, they'd call a sing for that. ..Let me tell you something else about the evolution of these sings. When Uncle Silas was a young man they'd sing in the daytime. By the time me and Clarke come along they sung only at night. And Dec. the 14, this past December, this all-day sing we had, was the first all-day sing in over 50 years. That's another tradition I was hoping we could see come back. We'll do that again this Oct. Lord willing. See, what happened. Two things. One is people began t get public jobs and so they had to work doing the day and had t work on their farm on Saturdays, so they'd sing at night. Plus they got electricity everywhere so they could sing in the night time. The third reason is that the preachers, well this actually happened Uncle Silas said. He was having an al-day sing over in Pierce Co. He drew more people to his sing than they drew to church over there an annual meeting. So the preacher was a little miffed over it... They told him he weren't going to be able to have no more sings on church day. On meeting day. That probably had a little to do with it. That power struggle between the sing and the church.

LKS shows photos in Okefenokee Album.

Mr. Harry (Chesser)'s been to Hoboken. I imagine they're singing out of the old White book. It's Turtle Dove and its not in this book.

Other singing photo is Uncle Cripple John Lee. that Dean that just died? That's his daddy. Clarke--he's my granddaddy's uncle.

David: He is Raymond and them's brother.

We discuss the Harper tapes. (they don't know about these tapes)

642 On GPTV I saw just part of a thing they had on there about the Okefenokee Swamp and on the very front of it, about 3 -5 minutes they had real old black and white movies. And they was fiddling and a dancing, and having some kind of going on. Can't tell you what the name of it was.