

TAPE LOG, SOUTH GEORGIA FOLKLIFE PROJECT

TAPE NO.

FIELDWORKER/RECORDING ENGINEER LAURIE SOMMERS

DATE May 18, 2005

ARTIST/INFORMANT Tollie Lee

RECORDING LOCATION Valdosta, GA (conference room, VSU)

OTHER PEOPLE PRESENT n/a

RECORDING EQUIPMENT USED Tascam DAT, Tram lavaliers

TAPE FORMAT Master DAT

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION RECORDING QUALITY: good quality, suitable for broadcast. Room sound at end to eliminate AC and fluorescent hum/rumble

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION TAPE CONTENT

Tollie discusses Primitive Baptist tradition in the Crawfordite and Bennettite traditions as background for a planned radio piece on Big Meeting recorded at Rome Primitive Baptist Church in Dixie Union outside Waycross in fall of 2004. Tollie lined hymns and was one of the elders who preached. Tape recording of just over an hour covers earliest memories of Big or Annual Meetings, stories about Big Meeting he was told (preacher and the bull), terminology for Big Meeting, Annual Meeting, Yearly Meeting, descriptions of what goes on in annual meetings (Sat vs. Sunday, time of the year, communion and foot washing, right hand of fellowship), hymn lining, Frank Lee and Elton Dowling as superb liners of the past, how Tollie joined the church, preaching style.

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Earliest memories as a kid, High Bluff and sleeping in the Cotton House

Stories of Big Meetings: Sardis and the preacher and the Bull, other stories

Terminology for Big Meeting

Took place in the fall, "a feasting time", harvest, shared with neighbors and really put on a spread

15:30 Description of annual meeting: Saturday, letters from messengers, right hand of fellowship, singing as letters delivered; Sunday = communion time

19:18 communion time description

21:30 reason men and women sit on separate sides is because of communion and foot washing

23:48 description of washing feet

26:38 Take the parting hand, right hand of fellowship

35:19 hymn lining, or “giving out a song”; Tollie uses the term “sing songed” to describe pitched delivery. Superb liners of the past were Frank T. Lee, his uncle, who he remembers well, and Elton Dowling, another uncle, who died when Tollie was young.

“It’s a book of poetry, not a book of music” on the Lloyd hymnal

39:30 Something in it besides your voice, has to be in your heart.

48:20 LKS: What made them superb liners? “Daddy called it vim and vigor.” Story of Uncle Elton at Sardis and gold dust.

51:00 different tunes, different voices of preachers

55:44 How Tollie joined church, first time preaching

107 end of tape, followed by room sound.

Tollie Lee Interview Part 1 May 18, 2005

1:50 LKS I wanted to talk just a little bit about 'Big Meeting.' Do have one of you earliest, or just your favorite memories of something that happened at your big meeting growing up? What's Big Meeting to you?

2:00 TL Well, my earliest recollections would be when I was 7, 8, 9 years old probably, and my mother and father was not members at that time yet, but we, daddy being a singer, a songster, we always went to church and a lot of people loved him and the Big Meeting to me as a kid was boys and girls that were my age would come home and spend Saturday night with us after the Big Meeting, at our home, ^{here} our bluff. And the boys would, um, sleep in the cotton house, and the girls would sleep on pallets on the floor. And all of the men...some of the grown up would wound up sleeping on pallets on the front porch. But us boys would sleep in the cotton house. Or I should say we stayed in the cotton house. We cut up all night and suffered the next day.

3:03 TL It always paid off because also that was a time when we were growing up, we didn't have a lot of sweets on a weekly basis. But at the annual meeting time, there was always lots of pies, homemade chocolate pies and lemon pies, and coconut pies and...even banana pudding was a specialty because you just didn't get that every week. But at the annual meeting, you could depend on that kind of... You know, to a boy that's growing, you know hunger pains was his main, was his main thing. So that's what, uh, as a kid, that we looked forward to, and then to play, to swing on the grape vine. We'd always make us a sack swing. We could cut a grape vine off of a tree and tie a sack and put shucks in it and make a swing and uh...it was just wonderful growing up in that atmosphere. And the annual meeting to us was when everybody got together not knowing anything about the church, you know. The grown ups would be in the house or on the porch on in the kitchen and then they would be talking about how the meeting went that day and us kids could of cared less because we were kids.

4:22 LKS How many people would have gone at that time? When you, we're talking about what here now, in the 50's?

4:30 TL My dad's house, they would have been...most of the time... You know, I came from a large family anyway, there were ten of us kids, and I was the third oldest, so in 1950, see I was 8 years old, cause I was born in 42. So I'm talking about 50, 49, 50, 51 right and on up. Uh, probably boys my age, there would be 4 or 5 cousins, my age. And then sometimes there would be people from Florida or way off that were not kin to us that we knew that would come. So there would be as many as 8 or 10 or 15 in the cotton house, and the age groups would be in the cotton house sleeping. Now, they're supposed to be sleeping. There'd be anywhere from 6 years old to 12 or 13 years old. And, um, so there was always enough racket. And of course, out in the cotton house, we were far enough away from the house, the grown ups didn't know we were out there not sleeping, they thought we were sleeping. I'm sure they knew that they were kids one time and said 'yeah, they're probably sleeping' but we cut up.

5:44 TL The only bad part about that was, I was a sort of a proud little creature, and the next morning, you forget, when you're sleeping with cotton, no matter what kind of clothes you were wearing that night, when you got up the next morning, you had cotton lint all over your shirt and your pants and that's usually what you had to wear to church, because you put on your Sunday best Saturday, and you had your Saturday bath, and you put on your...and that's the way it went.

6:15 TL And I guess, hearing our parents talk about it as we grew up, with my dad growing up, hearing him talk about the, his annual meetings were similar to ours, maybe more comical because they had less natural things to, uh, keep them going. In other words it was horse and buggy days in his time, basically. In my time, they did have cars to go to church in. So, uh, he would tell us stories about it.

6:45 TL I guess one of the things that sticks in my mind was a ^{Big Meeting} Elizabethan at ^{Sardis} Sartus one time, one of my uncles was telling me about, it was lots of people went to see the uh man, the ^{Dickson} Dickson's, lived down off the St. Mary's river below south of ^{Sardis} Sartus. And this man was a farmer. There was no running water, there was no electricity, you know, it was that type deal. It was all...everything was cooked by wood. Draw your water with the well. And one of the old preachers was quite a comical fellow, they say, when he wasn't preaching. He liked to pull jokes and say funny things to people.

7:37 TL Anyway, what tickled me so was, my uncle told me about it. This happened back in the teen, nineteen teens I guess, or early 20's at the most. When I went home with the Dickson's, we uh...the preacher, his bed fell on the porch. There was so many people there, all were given an pillow and blankets on the front porch. And this man, this farmer, had a bull, cow, that was not satisfied, for some reason. All he did was bellowed all night and kept the preacher from sleeping. And the next morning, at about sun—just before sunrise, the preacher finally got up. He hadn't slept a wink, so he sat up and he told him, and he called that bull and he says 'if you will come up in this yard, I'll fix your bull hood and give you something to bellow about. And that to me was...of course that was not the words he used, but I'm sure the audience will understand what I'm talking about. That was the...that to me was comical and it was a story of an annual meeting.

8:58 TL And of course the people gather and another good friend of mine down in north east Florida told me about going, one of his earliest annual meetings to ^{Sardis} Sartus back in the late 20's, early 30's at the most. On Saturday morning, he said there were so many people there. And this was back before there was glass windows, ^{Elizabethan meeting} Elizabethan houses, it was all wood shutters. And the meeting was in September, so it was still mild weather, fourth weekend of September. All the doors were open, three sets of doors, and all the shutters were open, and people were standing 4 and 5 deep at the windows. And this one preacher that some of them, that he had never heard before, one of my uncles, Elton ^{Dallon} Dallon, he had been arranged to preach that morning, and he was a little short man. And he said that when, and he had never heard him either. And he just could get a seat on the back row, and he reserved to carry the letter from his church in Florida from Bethel, out of Florida. And he said that when this preacher started, when preacher Elton ^{Dallon} Dallon started, to him, he had a vision that was like gold dust came out of this man's mouth, and floated on

everybody in the house, went out the doors, went out the windows. And to him, it was just the most beautiful sound he had ever heard, and the most beautiful words coming out of a man's mouth. And he knew it wasn't gold dust, but that's what he was seeing. He was having a vision. He was mesmerized. And he never forgot it, it was such an impact on him, he was telling me this in the 80's. it was almost 60 years later that he was telling me about this. And it stayed with him all these years.

10:58 TL So the annual meetings was...things happened to people and it's, you know, spiritual things happen to them, along with the fun-loving things that happened to them. The kids, it was fun, it was fun time. For the grown-ups, it was serious church time and...that kind of stuff. They went for the singing, and to hear the preachers. And everybody, everybody had company. Every household that lived within 5 or 6 or 10 miles of that meeting house they had company go home with them because that was, that was the custom. And they had dinner at home Saturday night. And then what was left over was fixed to go back to church. They would have dinner on the grounds on Sunday, and they would take the dinners back to intermission on Sunday before communion. All the people would spend their lunch and have lunch. And there again, with the kids, that was something special because you always had plenty of pies and cakes and that's what us boys...the girl not so much, but the boys were into mama's pies and grandma's pies.

12:14 LKS Girls probably had to help make the pies and you just got to eat the pies, right?

12:18 TL That's correct, that's correct.

12:20 LKS You use the term annual meeting if I'm talking about this. Is that the more common term to describe the event? I've also heard Big Meeting or, um...

12:31 TL Yearly meeting was a common term. ^{in my growing years,} (???) My grandpa called it the yearly meeting according to his, my daddy's generation. And daddy called it...sometimes he would say yearly meeting, sometimes he'd say big meeting, sometimes he'd say annual meeting. I guess it depended on what hit him when he was going to talk about it, you know, what words came to him or how he felt. It was never a boastful thing, it was always a yearning for the annual meeting to come. Or maybe a yearning to see people that maybe he hadn't saw in a long time, since last year. So it was like the yearly feast that's written about in the Old Testament in the Bible, and the New Testament. To these people, it was a feast in time, in all kind of ways; spiritual and natural food and feasting on one another's fellowship, you know. Meeting, um...you know, how they've been doing and how many babies been born since, you know, and all this kind of stuff. You know, and how is the crops and, cause...

13:56 TL Where I was growing up, the annual meetings I was accustomed to were in the fall, in September and October. I found out as I got older that other places had annual meetings in the spring of the year. So I suppose that, for them, it would have been a little bit different. To me it was always the harvest time, which was a special tie of the year, you know. You see the tables, the cribs getting full and all the ~~canon~~ that's been done in

Canning

the summer, you see the patches full of food and...The annual meeting was a time they shared it with their neighbors they, who really put on a spread. They worked for weeks and days cooking. And really, what it was all about was to go to church...for spiritual food.

14:55 LKS How is it different, I mean how we're going to try to explain it to an audience who's unfamiliar...how's annual meeting different from just everyday meeting? What's different, what's special about it? How is it different?

15:12 TL An annual meeting, for instance, one meeting house and a community, a prescribed community, say they meet the first Sunday of September, that was their homecoming. To some people it may be called homecoming. And, the annual meeting is when all the visiting churches or church members, the churches send letters, church letters, epistles. Each church, if there's 6 churches or 10 churches or 3 churches that correspond with them. That each one of them churches write a letter, how their welfare is. If they've had new members or who died or how...if all is at peace and all this stuff. They each write a little short letter. And the annual meeting on Saturday, after all the preaching, then they come together in their conference, their business meeting of the annual meeting. Those letters are read to the congregation, that is a custom, from each church a letter is read. And then they, when the visiting churches, when they finish reading those letters, then the home church, where the annual meeting is being held, they want to receive them, all the messengers. And while they're singing songs from the hymnbook, they receive the messengers from all these other churches by singing and giving them the right hand of fellowship. And they're, the home folks go around...The visitors line the isles of the church pews and the home folks goes around and fellowships each one while they're singing these hymns. And then that's, on the Saturday meeting, that's what makes it a special time. And because the letters are written, because all letters, you know, if you've got different, all different writers, if a fellow's pressed spiritually to write something, he may write something concerning an experience or grace, or however the Lord had led him to write a short letter, besides what is put in a letter, you know, how the welfare of the church is. So that's interesting to the people and to the members.

17:35 TL And also, of course or Sunday, the annual meeting, there's always communion time after preaching. But Saturday is the big day too. When the letters are being read and the fellowship is being received and singing. And that's what makes the ^{Annual} name meeting versus the other eleven months of the year, they just have their little business meeting without all that fanfare, or I call fanfare, big to-do where everybody sends letters.

18:12 LKS Communion, though, takes place only at annual meeting or does it does it take place other times during the year?

18:16 TL It depends on the custom of the church. Where I go now, it just happens at the annual meeting. Where I used to go, it was every three months. But it still, that was just communion, that was not called the annual meeting. But, you always had communion on the annual meeting. That was a custom and a set practice. The ones that do every three months still do, have their annual meeting at the same time they did.

18:53 LKS Describe the, again, for the, I mean I recorded the communion, but much of what's going on...you have to see it to know what's going on. Can you just describe what communion is like at the annual meeting and what happens and maybe...

19:13 TL Well, communion time with us, with these people was always...some say it's the most sacred event to them...I don't like to class events in the church as one more than other because to me they're all important. It is a special time, I will say that. It is a special time in that normally there's the deacons, take charge and the wives take over the bread, the bread is unleavened bread baked by the deacon's wives. And the wine is usually made by the deacons from the vine. In this area, it's from the muska-vine *miscadine* (...?...) and it's usually the red or the black grape for the wine because it's supposed to represent the blood of the lamb, Jesus Christ. There's, they're set on the table, the two little pieces of bread, unleavened baked bread and the bottles of wine and two cups or glasses. And usually two ministers. At a usual meeting, there wouldn't be two ministers. One will serve...he will line a hymn or give out a hymn number concerning communion and the lord hymnbook. And the congregation will sing it and then, if he has some excerptation to be given, he does it. When he's through with that, or if he doesn't have excerptation, the first thing he does, then, after that is he kneels in prayer, tells the congregation he's going to kneel in prayer and beg the Lord to make this a special communion. They get up and then they serve the bread. The two ministers break the bread into small pieces and the deacons distribute it among the members.

21:34 TL One deacon goes to the men's side and one to the lady's side. And the reason the men and women are sitting opposite is because they're going to wash feet, and it would be, it would not be prudent to have men and women sitting in the same pew washing feet, because the women wear dresses most generally. And that's why the women are on one side of the house and the men are on the other.

21:59 TL Anyway, then when communion, when the bread is served, and then come back and then the other minister does, comes around and does his thing with the wine. If he has excerptation, he does it, and then he kneels in prayer. Then after that, he pours the wine in the glass or the cups, and then the deacons pass, the deacons swap places, the ones that serves the brothers serves the women, and vice versa. And they, uh, serve out of one cup. Everybody drank the same sip of wine out of the same cup. And there's never been no sickness, to my recollection or anybody's recollection, ever been contacted or contracted at communion service. It's just like a baptism in January in the river versus a baptism in July in the river. There's no ever been sick, made sick from that. As a general rule, you'd think it's too cold, you'll get sick, but that doesn't happen. Because wine, in itself, is a pure, the alcohol in the wine is a purifier. But it happens to the people as a spiritual thing. They protect that as the blood. The bread is His body and the wine as His blood. As the scriptures command us, the savior says 'as you do these things, do them in remembrance of me.'

23:40 TL Well, after everybody's through, the bread, the communion time involves with us washing feet. And the deacons have already brought into the house a few pales of

water and the servant, who is the elder or the preacher, we call them servants or elders, that served around the table, the deacons bring him a pan and a towel to guard himself. And if he has on a coat, or if it's winter time or if he has on a coat, he pulls it off and guards himself with a towel and they hold the water there and he dips water and, depending on the custom of the meeting. At some of them, a preacher dips twelve pales of water; six for the sisters and six for the brothers. Or sometimes he would just dip one and the deacons finished dipping it for those, for the membership. And then they washed one of their feet, uh, the two preachers washed one of their feet. And all the members washed one of their feet, if they're physically able. Uh, sickness is a lawful excuse, or for some reason another handicapped. If a man's cut his hand or a man's cut his foot or something, they'll be excused if they want to be excused. But, as a general rule, everybody wants to do it, and it gets to be a desire planted in their heart, to want to be humble enough to be at a brother's feet because we were commanded by the scriptures. And after the deacons or over seers of this...and those deacons serve and usually get...if they have available deacons, they will get other deacons to help pass these pans of water out. And as they finish, they bring the dirty water, our it out, and then they more—they pour more water into the pans and give the person a clean towel and they go until everybody's finished.

25:23 TL Brothers and sisters. Sisters on one side and the brothers on the other side. And when everyone is finished washing feet, then is when they throw all the dirty towels back on the table and put the pans up and they sing a hymn and the annual meeting is when we take the parting hand also. That's another distinguish between a regular Sunday meeting or regular communion time. The annual meeting is accustom for us to take the parting hand.

26:29 LKS Describe what that means.

26:31 TL A parting hand is while the people, the congregation is singing, they strike hands, right hand of fellowship, one with another. The preacher may go around or all may walk up to the preacher and whoever you're standing next to you, while you start singing, you take the right hand of the fellowship, you shake his hand, he shakes your hand, and then you go about or move about slowly or you can stand in one place and all of them can come to you. It depends on where you were standing in the house. Or you turn around and speak to the ones in the pew behind you and they speak to you, or fellowship with you. Fellowship means taking right hand of fellowship. And sometimes it's a hug. Some like to hug necks. Men hug men's necks and women hug women's necks. And they also hug one another's necks too. All keeping everything descent and in order also....

27:30 TL It's a special time. A lot of time it's a time of parting, you know...sometimes it's a time of joyful parting and sometimes you will see tears being shed because some older person may think that this is his last time or lady and they may be shedding tears profusely because they feel like this, they won't never get to see them again...So it is a time of joy and a time of farewell and sadness. And it is, I guess the emotions sometime will run the gamete from joy being that we've had a good annual meeting until we hope to meet again. And then those that feel like they're sad that they may not get to come

back again...(?)...I've been in both, from one end of the spectrum of emotion to the other end, so it's hard to describe. You don't know when it's going to hit you. The feeling of are...or maybe you're crying because you've had such a good meeting and the Lord's been good to the whole congregation. Maybe you've got, maybe new members were—came into the fold that day and you're joyful about that. Or maybe somebody—and sometimes you hear of a death, and maybe there'll be a funeral the next day and all this kind of stuff.

29:08 TL The whole annual meeting involves—I guess one annual meeting would involve many many things, it seems like sometimes. The whole way and plan of salvation for a traveling pilgrim. If I call somebody that is born again Christian, I called him a traveling pilgrim. And at an annual meeting, most generally, he would get to experience something in life that, although he may experience it many many times over again and again, he may live to be 98 or 100 years old, but he can experience something at an annual meeting sometimes that you may not experience just going to church on Sundays somewhere. Because a letter reading on Saturday from all the different churches are kin to them. We've called them apistles and all. We've called them gospel letters, we've called them minister letters, we've called them, just, church news from different churches. To hear that read, seeing the fellowship being received, taking the right hand of fellowship on Sunday and taking the parting hand, the right hand of fellowship on Sunday when you break up. Breaking up means to break up the day and go home. Sing a song and go out, when we go out. (...?) After supper was over we sang a hymn and that's what we hoped we were doing, trying to do.

30:52 LKS Are there particular hymns that are sung? Saturday would be when you're extending the letters and the right hand of fellowship, are there any particular or can there be any song that's sung?

31:10 TL It can be between—because you know, you use the Lord Hymnal in these parts, and it can be any of those songs, anywhere from one to 705. And it depends a lot on who's, who gives it out. Normally the pastor does not give out song. Cause he's going to be part of the...he's the home membership, if he's a member there. Normally he gives—calls on another elder or preacher to give out the song. And it depends on if that preacher has a song on his mind, or if somebody requested one. It could be any one of the 705 songs. Normally they try not to do a parting song, you know. It can be from “On Free Grace” to—right down to—it could even be a death song if, you know, there's death hymns in the Lord—so no, to answer that question, it can be any of the songs. But most generally, it's the song that's like “From Every Stormy Wind that Blows” or “There's a Fountain Filled with Blood” or “How Happy Are they that the Savior Obey” you know. It'll be a song of joy or encouragement most generally. If—most generally it will be a song of encouragement.

32:38 LKS What about during communion? Are there any particular songs that are sung only during communion or...?

32:44 TL For the communion service—there again it depends on the preacher, or if he's had a request. There is, in the Lord Book, there is songs dedicated to communion. Um, 204...I think they start around 240, 239, somewhere around there and they go for several pages, several hymns in the Lord Book. But, um, there again, there's no set rule. If a preacher that has the first part is assigned to that and a baptism and a song is on his mind, or just a Christian (..?) song, or "Own Free Grace," he would not—nobody would say nothing to him. But there is the song book, as you know, is broken up for—there's a song for every occasion in a meeting, church meeting. But there's no rules for that.

33:52 LKS I wanted to—again some of this I know, but I'm just trying to get some stuff for—you know we might have a possibility of—given as much possibility of things we can talk about in the radio piece. Also, put this in the archive. We've got like a half hour?

34:11 LKS Let's just talk a little bit about the Lord hymnal, then, and the songs, the hymns that are sung in the meeting house. Let me go first to something we talked about before. It's been a while. Not everybody lines a hymn. And the hymns are only lined at certain points in the service. Can you talk to me a little bit about hymn lining and, uh, for example, who does that typically and then what the characteristics are for someone who's going to be a—someone who would do that. You know, what constitutes a good song leader for a lining out of a hymn.

35:02 TL You know, that is a good question. I, of course when I was growing up, didn't never thought about it with all my luck. And I just know that, I just know that there's a lot of elders or preachers that have been hymn liners in this country. There's not, I've heard of one in Kentucky, Tennessee I think. I've heard him on tape only. And maybe some in Virginia. But down here where I was raised, I had two uncles that were super hymn liners...

35:43 LKS What were their names?

35:45 TL Elton ^{Pauling} ~~Dollan~~ (??) was one and one was Frank T. Lee. Frank Lee. I remember Uncle Frank very well, but uh, Elton Dollan, I was a boy, I was not made to go to the church house, but I was told that he was one of the best. He...sing-songed his hymn lining. He was gifted to that. And, uh, and there was a few others, but most, for the most part, they were few and far between, the ones that I considered—when I heard of a hymn line, if it did something to me, shoot a fire through you or something. And I don't know what caused me—when I was being burdened to do, to go to the pull pit, all I can tell you is the first time I picked up the book to—they wanted me to give out a hymn. They called it giving out a hymn, lining a hymn. And it just came. It came out of my mouth as I was about to sing it. And it was something that I couldn't control at that juncture of the day, at that point of the day when it came time for me to give out a hymn. When I did it, it just came out that way. And, there was almost as many tunes in my hymn lining as there were tunes in the (..?) book. And I was not even aware of that for a long time until the hymn starters mentioned to me one day, after I'd been in the pull pit for three or four years, ordained. (...?) They told me, or asked me if I'd noticed that, and I have never noticed it until that time. But, the lord, it was made aware to me as I lined hymns, that that's where

it came out. And a lot of times, it would be an inclination to the song starter, well, there's my tune. ...However my voice was, that's what would be...you know, cause they're metered hymns, common meter, long meter. It's a book of poetry, not a book of written music. So the song starter, we'd always say, thank some brother to sing a tune. And all were invited to sing that could, would, as the Lord will. So, uh, hymn lining, I guess it's a gift, to me it's a gift of God, that he gave me. And I still give all the joy and honor and praise to Him because I don't think—I think that if I was lining a hymn, or tried to line a hymn, without that spirit, I don't think I could do it. I believe that people that knew me...I'll also say that I believe that people that knew me from times past would say that's not just exactly the way it sounded a few years ago. Or whatever, I know your voice may change a little bit, but there's something that's got to be in you besides just your voice. There's gotta be a help mate there, and it's in your heart. And it's gotta be pressed in your mind. And everybody knows that's a Bible believer, knows that the Lord has that power to do that hymn lining.

39:49 TL And the reason the hymn lining, I've been told, I've been wondering about that too, and we've talked about this... because in the days of old, our four fathers, there was not enough money to buy enough books. So the preachers coming through this area, they would line their hymns out so the people could sing them. He would give them a line or two lines, and they would sing them words. And then he would give them two more, one or two more, or three more lines and they would sing that. And, uh, because now, I feel like, I can envision or wonder if it's not gonna be something that's gonna be gone one day. It scares me that it might be gone one day. Hymn the preachers. I'm hoping the Lord will give it to them.

40:42 LKS Can you give an example, say of how you might line, uh, the first verse of Amazing Grace, and how that might work? Something that people'd be familiar with, and how a hymn is lined as opposed to just starting out and singing it?

41:00 TL Well, the preacher would, the preacher would go, when everybody got to the number, hymn number from the book, the preacher would start out and do Amazing Grace. He would do two, he would do two lines, because it's a four line—Amazing Grace is seven or eight, seven verses, I think it is. Uh, and there's four lines to a verse. Because it's a common meter song, so it's four lines. And, uh, he would read two lines or line two lines and stop. And the song leader, who ever it fell on to do that, who ever was pressed on to start Amazing Grace, he would start singing, and they would sing them two lines. And just before they got to the last word of the second line, the preacher starts lining the next two lines, and he lines them out. So there's a continuity, there's no break. There's a continuity.

42:04 LKS Could you actually line the first two lines just to demonstrate it?

42:10 TL Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

42:19 LKS And then they actually, the tune is imbedded in that, or people have to know what the tune is?

42:27 TL If...there's a little bit of it there. That is what I can't hardly answer you because I have give out, partially, the—I've been arranged to the pull pit, where I was responsible for giving out a hymn, and I have lined a hymn like...I'm sorry but I can't tell you which one. It may been a particular meter, or a long meter or a short meter or eights and sevens, or eights and sixes, or a Linux, or but maybe have never even lined that hymn before. Because there's probably some that I haven't, because there's 705 of them. And we sang, a lot of times we sang—but what I'm trying to get at...I have lined hymns before and not even realized that a tune was coming out that would be associated when the songster started, then I would realize that...what I had...my voice, in the sing-song fashion, had lined him a tune that was usable to that long meter or that short meter that comes with the song. It just happened. There was no planning. It's something...in other words, I don't think you can go to school and learn that. I know that you can go to school to learn to be an auctioneer, but most auctioneers got the same tune. Whatever mode that comes, he keeps that the rest of his life. Hymn lining may not keep the same mode, except the ones that read, you know, the preachers that just read it. But, uh, they called it lining.

44:31 LKS Well, some people do that in the...in the Primitive Baptist Church they don't...I guess it's the term you're saying, sing-songs, so it's pitched, versus those who simply just read or...

44:44 TL They call it lining, but that's not lining. To me that's not lining. Now, the actual—I don't want to be a be a Webster on it, but to me, lining a hymn is when somebody, the spirit hits him and he actually sing-songs that poetry out versus “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.” That is just reciting or reading versus the lining part.

45:20 LKS You talked about Eldon? ^{Elton Dalling} ~~Elton Dallon~~ and Frank Lee being superb liners, you mentioned earlier. And that Elton ~~Dallon~~, ^{Dalling} with sing-song—can you just—what made them superb liners in your view?

45:40 TL Even the little children love to hear him. Much less, the eighty and ninety year olds and all in between. That's why—if you have—to me, if I've—I guess...I've got to be careful here, because I don't want to offend you as a professor or a doctor....This is just an example. When I was in school, when I was a junior I think, I had this history teacher, or government teacher. We called him the government teacher. He talked in the monotone all the time. And after you were in the class about 30 seconds, you know, you were bobbing your head. “Son, stay awake, because you gotta get this.” You know, I'm being animating here, but...and then I had a history teacher that was walk around the room. And if there was scrap paper on the floor, he picked it up and said “Hey you. Who's George Washington? Or What did Abraham Lincoln do? Or What'd Thomas Jefferson do?” Versus this man that just put at the front of the class and just was...what he was...they were both equally intelligent, but it was the delivery. One was boring as the day is, summer is long, and one of them was interesting. And you paid attention and learned more. That was—as a boy I can remember Frank lining a hymn, and my ears

would “shoot.” It’s like his preaching. I would hear his preaching and I would stop, you know. Some preachers could preach all day and I would never listen to them because it was a flat...something or other. He may be doing, and is doing God’s work. But it just...to children...and if every grown-up don’t have a little bit of child in him, then I’ll, then I’m not present with you today.

48:05 TL Um, that’s what I’m talking about, the superb—he had that vigor, vim. Daddy called it vim and vigor and saying. Uh, there was some vim and vigor...there was life. There was, uh...I think Uncle Elton said one time, I was told that he said this, uh, cause it was before my time. My father told me that he said it. That he was arranged to preach around a communion table at an annual meeting, and everybody had just come in—at that time, those people had morning services, you understand. They went out and had a big dinner on the grounds and then they come back in the house for communion service. Well, I’ve told you about the pies and the cakes and all the good chicken and rice and all that stuff, vegetables and...Well they’d go out and eat a big dinner and come back in and, you know, and they’d get sleepy. And I mean, that’s common sense and that’s gonna happen, that’s just natural.

49:17 TL Well, daddy said Uncle Elton was arranged around the table first and he was having a hard time. He’d sung the song and he looked around about the house and everybody was bumping their heads and going to sleep. And he said, all of a sudden, the Good Spirit jumped on Uncle Elton, with vim and vigor, and he said, he shouted “Wake up, brethren, Lord’s here!” And daddy said, in his mind, what he saw when that happened, and he said I was about to go to sleep too. He said “what I was then,” you know, he says, you know, “when your mama used to hang, she washed all the bed sheets and clothes and towels and hung them on the line in the outside dryer, as we called it? The old timie dryer on the clothes line? And the wind and the sun, the wind got in them and it picked them up.” He says “son you remember that?” I said “yes, sir, I remember that.” He says, “That’s what happened. That’s where your Uncle Elton was. When he was preaching and the lord hit him,” he said that he was...he was like...he says, “them old wet clothes hanging on a line did” he says, “he was like the spirit that comes and just woke them all up. And the sun on them, dry them, and just lift them off the hanging plane to a flying plane in the breezing air (..?) Okay? Does that explain it?”

50:46 LKS Did different, you use the phrase sing-song. Did different—to describe the pitch and the inflection and the delivery. Did different elders, either when preaching or when lining, have different tunes? In other words, were there people that were known for their...?

51:10 TL Yeah. You could tell, uh, you could tell, I could tell, if I could hear him, I wouldn’t have to be in the house. If I could hear him, I could tell you who it is. And back from a boy hood, uh...there’s, yeah, they have different manners, uh, and different voice. And I was told, before my time, that the people that came before me talked about Henry Clay Highsmith—Reverend Henry Clay Highsmith’s gift. And Owen Gibson’s gift. The one that wrote poetry? The three hundred something poems. Uh, see, he was well loved and sing-song—daddy told me—and when he was a boy, he didn’t like Joe Thomas. He

didn't like Joe Thomas's preaching. He liked his brother Efrom because, he says "it was like this." He says, "To me, Joe Thomas..." Now this is, I don't mean no harm by this, because people, I want anyone to become offended, anywhere in the state of Georgia, anywhere in the country. But this was a way of getting me to understand what he was talking about. He said, "Well, Joe Thomas," he says, "was like riding in a mule and a wagon. It was solid, sound altering, and you would get there. But you were slow." He says, "Efrom was like in one of these racing buggies with a fine mare trotter hooked to it." And he says it was like a flying breeze. And he says, "I was a youngin," he's talking about when he was a kid. He says, "Us boys just flocked to the house to hear him, because that's the way his voice was... And we didn't even know what he was talking about, but we loved to hear the voice. And we knew he was talking about the Bible. And King David or Moses and Aaron or what do you know... the Lord gave him that delivery for your children to come gather around and listen. His brother was for the old people, more or less. Or for the... you know what I mean? For the—we come to church we want some corn, we want some meat. It's like a big family dinner. Preacher's like a family dinner, a homecoming dinner. You know, you got some that bring the green beans, you got some that bring the sweets, you got some that bring the meat. And once in a while you get one that brings some of a little of all of it, and the Word. That's my impression. And I don't mean to be judgmental, I just think—that's my impression of even the preachers today that I listen to. I love to hear them, all of them, because all of them's got a different manner.

54:30 LKS But, John Crowley has described you as somebody who's more like... I wouldn't know, I wasn't there... but the preachers of old, as it were, I mean, with the way that you deliver. And I don't know if it's even your contemporaries, some of them like, um, Elder Rowan and some of the other ones that I've heard. You know, again, everybody's different. But the way that you've inflected and have the tone... Is that something that, looking back at the preachers of your experience or hearing your family talk about it? Do you think that's something? You said it may be dying out like the hymn lining. The use of this sing-song delivery... I don't know if that's just your term, or if you've heard other people use that term.

55:25 TL Well, that's not, sing-song is my term. I don't know, when the first time... I can take... when I became... fell my lopt (?) Absolutely found my lopt. (???) There was no other way. I was going to the doctor, I thought I was going to die. I thought my time was short. Matter of fact, I was about to drive the doctor crazy going in there with ailments. I was hurting in my heart, hurting in my chest, I was sick all the time. Physically. And he couldn't find out what was wrong with me. He finally sent me to an internist, but the internist found everything... and I didn't even know I was doing it, but I was in so much spiritual trouble. See, I was running. I was running from the ministry. And I didn't know that I was running from it, but I was, definitely (?). I was so scared to do it. I didn't want to do that. Cause I knew that a preacher, I thought a preacher had to be pias, and he could never have any fun. And he could never cut up with anybody. Cause I was always full of fun and full of cut up with people everywhere I go. And so I runned from it, I just...

56:42 TL But anyway, when it finally happened, that I had—I was made to get on my feet in an (?) service. The Lord picked me up off my seat, put me on my feet, and I began talking. It just poured out, like it poured water out of a bucket. And the lady told me, one of the members that had been there for years, she says, and she's a member as a little girl. When it was over with, she says, "If this will help your feelings any way, and encourage you, you sound like the preachers I heard 50 and 60 years ago." She says, "I think the Lord was leading you." She says, "I thought it'd help your feelings." And it did, because I was afraid, what if it was, you know, if that was her judgment, and we're supposed to let our peers, our church brethren be our judge, not ours. We shouldn't judge our own matter in this matter. It did help my feelings. It encouraged me for her to tell me that. But it just came that way. It came out old. And I's singing. I wonder about all the singing I did on the tractor, you know, plowing years ago, I would sing at the top of my voice, every where I went. I'd sing myself to sleep at night when I was growing up. My mama and daddy and those 10 youngins, I would sing to all my brothers... So I don't know why the Lord—I had one man tell me one time... heard me a few years ago, he says, "You heard that man that sings that "Where art Thou Death?"...Ralph Stanley?" He says, "You sound just like Ralph Stanley." are there

58:34 LKS Singing or preaching?

58:36 TL Well, when I was preaching... He says, "You sound like Ralph Stanley singing." And I says, "Really?" I said, "Well, man. I ought to get me a..." I was just cutting up. There I go again with my foolishness, and I shouldn't do that. But...

58:54 LKS Was there any... I know it's something that came to you, and it's God given and it's spiritual, but were there any... you mentioned some of these, you were really young when Elton Dalton and Frank Lee was really a superb liner. Were there any...

59:11 Don't remember Elton's preaching at all.

59:14 Do you remember hearing any preachers as a boy, when you were growing up who had a delivery that you feel like you sounded like or you got some ideas from at all. A tune or...

59:35 TL I listened to Uncle Frank. I liked Uncle Frank's preaching cause... that's when I came to the... when I was burdened to go to the church, he was preaching. And the day that I went, he was preaching about compelling power, the compelling power of Jesus Christ. And that's the day that I was struck to my knees and couldn't walk for thirty or forty minutes until I was made to ask for a church home, cause I had to... cause it was made known to me there was no way up off my knees. I tried to get up and I couldn't. My whole body was in knots, muscle bound knots, and I couldn't move until... and all this time I was being told, you've got to ask these people for a church home. It was like a voice over and over in my head. "You've got to ask these people for a home." And I never ridden about, I had probably ridden about Apostle Paul, read about him. But I didn't know nothing about on the road to Damascus. I didn't know nothing, but the same thing happened to me. A light came down and showed me that I had to get to the church

people showed me where the church was, in the line of the light. And I, except I wasn't blinded, naturally. I couldn't walk. They had to carry me physically. And I was 28 years old. The deacons had to get on each side of me, when I ask them, cause I couldn't walk. And help me walk to the front bench to sit down. Once I got up there, then my strength came back. And I stood up and took Frank Lee's hand.

1:01:31 TL But the preaching, I don't think I...I never tried to imitate nobody. I know, that never, uh, and don't think the devil won't put things like that in your head. And he did, but I didn't...I probably did sound like him sometimes. I've thought sometimes, cause you know, and I know you've done enough recordings of yourself and stuff. You know when you're talking, and it's ^{been} recorded, you know it doesn't sound the same when it's played back to you as you hear it as you're talking. See, to me, my voice is nothing like, and what I'm hearing when I speak to you, as played back to me. It's totally, to me it's totally different. So, and I'm preaching, I hear myself, and it's not what I hear when I get a tape back if somebody taped it. You know, it's been taped before. And I've absolutely, I've actually broken down in tears before, because, and prayer, the places I've been recorded in prayer and preaching. I've actually broken down in tears in instances because I didn't realize...I realize that I cannot do that by myself. I know that the Lord, God Almighty is doing that, using me as an instrument. And it's what's made tears in my heart melt, at the sound of my own voice. And some might say, "Well he sure is a conceded rascal," but that'll be it for from me. I'm telling you this because it's the truth. So, I don't know how...I just know the love of the people. Just people going to church, now that I'm baptized (....?....) and they've told me what happened to them.

1:03:41 TL This minute that brother Hillery saw Uncle Elton with gold dust come out of his mouth, he told me one time. He told me one time, it was something that the Primitive Baptists never did, they never boasted about a preacher, or never bragged about it. But if they thought a man was low down, they'd tell him something, they'd pick him up a little bit in here, not (...?...) that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about giving a heart encouragement. But he told me one time that he was glad he was in church that day because that was the most beautiful words and sounds that he had ever heard. And that was enough. And that's all he said. Because it could have been too much, you know? It could have been too much for me, but the Lord snatched me back down as soon as he said it. I knew what he was doing. He was trying to help my feelings. Because after this happened, after this sermon, I was low down, and he knew it. I felt like I had just displeased everybody. Then, when he told me that, all of it came back to me. And at the same time, I was...the Lord gave me restraint within and without to just (...?...) ...I think this young at (?) ^{has a beautiful} voice, I love to hear him. I love to hear Jim (?) he has a sing-song voice. He's one of my favorite.

stay on an even keel
Brother T. L. Rowan

1:05:36 LKS Clark does too, I think.

1:05:39 TL That's what I'm talking about. I love to listen to ^{Brother} both Clark. Used to be Johnny Barber at Sartus for a short time. He didn't live. He got cancer and died. He didn't live very long. But he had a beautiful, he had a real beautiful voice. My mama loved my Uncle, my Great Uncle Even. ~~He (?)~~ I never did know it. She loved to hear him

Evan Hideo

preach...she said he had a wonderful voice. She said he had a wonderful voice for the young people, like daddy said about ~~he~~ from Thomas, years ago.

from

UCS end of tape ———

1:06:15

Room sound