

Interview #5 (27 minutes)

Conducted: August 27, 2003

Place: in the Appalshop theater, so that Tom could be putting together a new interactive sculpture while he spoke with me.

- Tom talks about his beginnings in radio at age 15 in Dayton, OH (graduating high school in 1986)
- Talks about learning how to run a community radio station in high school (not possible any more). GOOD STUFF ABOUT HOW BECOMING INVOLVED IN RADIO HELPED HIM GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL.
- Thought at first I wanted to be a punk rock and roll record producer. Got involved in environmental issues in college (used to camping and fishing) and video.
- At 19, he decided he was going to produce a documentary about all the environmental issues in the region.
- Then I saw the documentary “On Our Own Land” produced at Appalshop and knew that’s where I wanted to work. BUY THIS FILM
- I remember my first contact with coal mining when I was 9 years old camping. Seeing slag heaps and I thought it was cool, like a ghost town. USE THIS.
- Talks about environmental issues in Dayton as he was growing up, as it related to youth culture.
- Talks about fishing with his Dad. Orange acid rain, bright blue, raw sewage (“straight pipe”). History of ‘company towns’ and what happened when the companies moved out.
- Talks about “On Our Own Land” as one of the best arts and social change projects he knows about (sidebar?), and the most successful Appalshop has ever had. One of his greatest inspirations.
- Shortly after seeing the film (1989), he met folks from Appalshop and began to get involved. “I was in the right place at the right time” and got hired on to the radio station (1990).
- Began work at Appalshop cleaning out storage rooms. “I learned quickly, everybody does a little bit of everything.” Goes on to name all the people he met, many of whom still work at Appalshop. Lists tasks, including hiking and/or driving up the mountain to the transmitter on all-terrain vehicle.
- Tells background stories about the transmitter.
- Tells how beautiful the valley is when seen from the transmitter (23 minutes in), and how inspired he was to tell stories about it. Talks about “the Jesus stick.”
- (25 minutes in) The importance of keeping lines of communication open among the volunteer workers at Appalshop, of community-building, of “dealing with people as people.” Talks about how your objectives as an artist intersect with the objectives of the people whose lives you are documenting.