

Greg Adamus Interview

CK: Today is February first, 2015 and I'm-

GA: Sixteen!

CK: Sixteen, thank you, I said I was rusty; this is Cindy Kus, I'm sitting at the Alpena County Library in the Alpena History Room, with Dr. Greg Adamus.

GA: Hello.

CK: And Greg is a keyboardist, percussionist, comes from Detroit, um, and has been in the Alpena area for a while, I'm not sure how long; but we're going to start out asking about your roots, you grew up in Detroit, and how long you were down there, when you first started playing and when you came to Alpena.

GA: Ok. Well, it's a real simple story. I was born in Detroit; but I grew up, my childhood, ah, my parents moved out to Dearborn Heights. So, I was a West Side Detroiter. And ah, I ah, I was blessed with two parents who were both musicians, and my dad was a semi-professional musician, he was also an engineer at Ford Motor Company; but he played all of his life and the big story there is he played through World War Two with clarinet in The Navy Bands. So when he came home, back to Detroit after that, he was a war hero, and he was a musician, so he got a Big Band together, and the rest, as they say, is history.

He kinda, he kinda really had the market. Ah, he hired my wife, or, my wife! My mother. He was dating my mother, found out she could sing pretty well, and she; he hired her as his vocalist in the Big Band. So, ah-

CK: And this is late 40's, early 50's?

GA: All, all through the late forties and all of the fifties; but the story there is she stopped singing for the band when she started having children. Now I have three siblings, and ah, so between the four of us, she basically, there's only two years between all four of us. So you can imagine, through all the fifties, she was pregnant or changing diapers- all the time. So, she, she didn't have a career path, pursued his music career throughout his whole life, he died in '87, and I was blessed to be in his orchestra, in his band.

I started out as his drummer, I was all of eleven years old. I was the youngest member, leaving junior high school, ah, to go play funerals. We would play parades for some of the funerals, and I'd sneak out of school, my dad would pick me up and we'd go do that. And that was, that was 7th- 8th grade, and then, certainly by high school, I was, that was my full time occupation. And, and it was good money; but the money was an afterthought, because I, I didn't need money when I was a kid, so the big deal about, about having that childhood, is I learned music by osmosis. Yes, I did practice; but it didn't feel like practicing; because in my, in my household, between my parents, and their musicianship, and then I had the three siblings, we all took, we all played.

CK: You all took lessons?

GA: So, oh yeah. So, it was like breathing air. It wasn't- there was no ordeal or drudgery in playing and getting better. It was what the Adamus house, - I'm blessed that I had fun throughout and the reason I stuck with it is because it became, it became a joy for me, so-.

CK: Well-

GA: Even now, the best time of my life.

CK: Really?

GA: I peaked early, yeah, no, it was- because, because I was a kid in an adult world. So you can imagine every weekend, and I was a, I was a big-boned, I was a big kid, physically, so I never got carded. I never, I never once couldn't play a gig because I was too young, because I looked older. And once I put that, that tuxedo on, and you know, combed my hair back, nobody bothered with me. And so, yes, being in the adult world as a kid, was fabulous for me; because I learned about life, I certainly, I rubbed shoulders with the best musicians in Detroit. My, my dad was very heavily involved with the, the musicians union, and so the guys he hired, were top-notch. And I was always not only the youngest musician on the gig, but I was the worst musician on the gig. But that's what you gotta do, you know- you ask any athlete, how do you get better at playing tennis? You got to play someone better than you.

CK: Right.

GA: Well, so here I was, every weekend, and, just playing with guys who took me under their wing. And that's why I do it now with younger people, you know, it's the whole idea of paying forward. So yeah, I was really in a lucky position. It, it was all about being blessed, being born into the right family at the right time to do what I loved.

CK: What clubs did you play at?

GA: Oh, wow. I'd have to say we played more private engagements- we played private parties. We played, our biggest market was the wedding circuit. So that's what we did. And because we were proficient and professional we could play any style, any type of music. And that's why the wedding market was our market, we played Jewish weddings, Polish weddings, Italian weddings, German weddings, any, any ethnicity, you can name, I've played those weddings. And you know, some of the music maybe was, was hash-dash, maybe some of it wasn't authen-, as authentic as it would have been otherwise if they had hired a band right from Poland or right from Germany; but the point is in Detroit in the seventies, you know, I'm talking about in my, my decades, as a performing musician in Detroit, which was all of the seventies, all of the eighties and most of the nineties- during those three decades, ah, the wedding market was such that you didn't want a purely ethnic band, you wanted a band that could play rock and roll, a band who could play Sinatra, and a band that could play, every once in a while, maybe, maybe four or five times a night, play a good polka. Or play a Viennese waltz, or play Chardash, or play the Hava Nagila- whatever it took.

CK: Mmhuh.

GA: So-

CK: You mentioned the funeral-

GA: Yes

CK: -bands?

GA: Yeah, those, those are gone away, they, they-

CK: Sounds, reminds me of New Orleans.

GA: Yeah, exactly what it was. We would play, we would, usually it was, ah, at church, we would play, inside the church and then, and then, as, whenever the casket moved, if the casket was in the hearse, the hearse would pull up to the church, the doors would open, the pall bearers would come by the side and the moment that casket started moving, the band would stand in the street and we would play. And then we'd play as the casket went up the stairs into the church, as soon as the door closed, we stopped playing. And then we we'd go play cards across the street. (Laughs) Of course I was only twelve years old, so I, I kinda, my job was to watch, watch the church to see when Mass was over so I could tell the band guys to get, get goin', you know, close the deck down, let's go, we got to play. And then, and then as, as the casket came back out of the church, we'd play again and then we'd follow the hearse and cortege to the cemetery, same deal. Whenever the casket was in motion, it had music- and that was a pretty cool thing, we played, we played some military ones, not as many; because of course, the military musicians, you know, that was the era of the Vietnam War and the Vietnam veterans, the bodies that came home, those were all taken care of by, by military bands, ah, so, we basically did the, the mom and pop ones.

CK. Hmm.

GA. So-lot of Hungarian, gypsies love music at their funerals, yeah.

CK: And so you would, would you um, I'm at a little loss for the word I want here

GA: That's all right.

CK: Tailor your music-

GA: Oh yeah.

CK: To the particular deceased person.

GA: Oh yes, yes, um, if there were, if there were tunes that, that we knew somebody liked, um, then yes, we would put that in there- but then, not, not a lot. I can remember at my grandfather's funeral, we played "Roll Out the Barrel," as, as the last tune. We played a polka right there in the cemetery. Um, certainly um, you know, the biggest memories of, of music and funerals, had to do with

musician's funerals; those are the toughest of all to play. And there's a real tradition- I'm sure it's still going on in Detroit and every large city, ah, when a musi-, musician passes, um, if you had anything to do with learning from that guy or gal, you showed up with your horn. And, now at my dad's funeral there was, I'm gonna guess, 30 some musicians that played, the whooole, the whole thing. Yeah, it was crazy.

CK: Wow.

GA: So-

CK: And when did that era end?

GA: Well, it, I don't know that it ended so much, as it ended when I left town.

CK: So it ended for you.

GA: Yeah, it ended for me; because now I'm up here.

CK: Ok.

GA: But frankly, it's not done anymore. I, in fact, the funeral library, the folio of the dirges, the Chopin, bahm, bahm, ba-bahm, bahm ba bahm ba bahm ba bahm – all that music I have since gotten rid of. I've sold it, so. I don't know that it's happening much anymore.

CK: Right.

GA: But that's ok.

CK: Yep, yep. Different times.

GA: Yeah.

CK: And these are different times, you're in Alpena now.

GA: Yep.

CK: And, howww long has that been?

GA: Oh goodness. I moved here in 1988. So it's been, it's been 28 years, 20-, I don't know, you do the math, you'll listen to this and you'll be able to do the math. Ah, but that's, I, I was um; I was actually a high school band director. I, I, I graduated from Olivet College with a music degree-

CK: Ok.

GA: In pea- my major instrument was piano. Which is kind of weird because piano players don't usually become band directors; because there's no piano in the band, it's basically horn players. But I was different, because I knew how to play the instruments, and I still, I still had a love of my

keyboard, my piano. So, um, so I graduated with that, I got a job at Dundee High School, Dundee Michigan, near the south border, just above, or to, to the west of Monroe.

CK: Monroe, mmhuh.

GA: And I taught there, and I taught at New Lothrop High School, which is west of Flint, between Flint and Owosso, did that for five years, and then one day, ah, it just, and then, all during that, those six years I went to get my Master's Degree in Educational Administration. So I knew that sooner or later I would stop being a band director and I would start being a principal. Now there's an interesting story about that, having to do with the wonderful world of music, so let me tell it, because-

CK: OK.

GA: -it's pretty important.

I noticed as a band director, I worked hard. It- thank god, I was young, because I can't tell you how hard it is- musically, politically, I mean you have to deal with parents, you're out in the public, and it's non-stop, you don't get summers off; because there are parades in the summer and there's, there's recruitment to do. It's a very, very, hard job. If you, if you see a high school band director, hug him- is all I got to tell you. It's really, really something. But, I noticed something- while I was doing all that. For those six years the high school principal, he had, he had at least a month off. And he was getting paid twice what I was getting paid. And I noticed every morning, I came to work, my car was there before his, and I noticed when I went home, his car was already gone. And I thought, what, what is this all about? That's why I went and got my Master's Degree in Administration, and I said "Look, I can't keep this pace up- band directing is just too much." And that's why I switched over. And ah, it was when I got the degree that I actively started looking for work as an administrator. And now, this brings me to 1988, because, it also specifies, Alpena. Because I swear to you, I didn't know Alpena from anywhere. I knew the word, Alpena. I knew there was an Alpena, Michigan; but I kid you not, it could have been, it could have been where Muskegon is. Or where- I didn't know where in the state it was- but here's what happened.

When you're a teacher and you want to be a principal, you have to find the lowest rung on the ladder to start, because you have no experience as a principal, right?

CK: That makes sense.

GA: Well that summer that I did that, which I think was, yeah, it had to be in '87 or '88, whatever it was, that summer, there were no other jobs open in the entire state except here in Alpena for an assistant principal at a junior high school. You talk about the lowest rung (Laughs). That doesn't there is nothing below that.

That's, if you, if you ask what's a perfect starting thing for someone with no experience, you look for an assistant principalship at a junior high school. Now there's only about ten of those in the whole state anyway; but that summer, there was only one open, and that was here in Alpena. So that's how

I ended up here- I, I applied, because I had to apply, because there was nowhere else to apply. And um, I remember sitting in my car when I got the Notice of Interview. And I said, “Ok, I got to go to Alpena and interview.” And I remember taking the map of Michigan out of my glove box and sitting in my car and trying to find Alpena on the map and I couldn’t find it! And I just kept going and going and then I went to the top of Michigan and I said, “Oh my god, what did I do?” It was too late, they called to interview, so I, I remember the long drive up here, I couldn’t believe it, for this Detroit, I thought, “Where am I going?”

CK: Now, did you have a family at that time?

GA: Ah, I had, I was married, and I had one son.

CK: OK.

GA: He was an infant.

CK: So this wasn’t just you.

GA: No.

CK: Uprooting and going somewhere-

GA: No, because my wife was a choir director at Montrose High School and she was greatly loved. She could have ran for mayor of that town. They just loved her. And I, you know, we had a square off and I said, “This is what I want to do, I, I worked hard for this Master’s Degree, I can’t do band directing all my life, this is the job that’s open, they’re offering it to me- let’s go...” And she had to walk in, her, to her high school principal and resign. She had to just say to her choir, “Ah, that’s it. It’s been fun, but I’m going.”

So- But oh, I’ve got to tell you about the, the way Alpena happened, speaking of my wife. Ah, when I, I had two rounds of interviews. I had a first interview with, you know, maybe ten other interviewees and then about four days later, they did callbacks of the top two candidates. So I interviewed the first round, I came up to Alpena by myself. That was that long, lonely drive, right? And I interviewed. Well you know how during an interview, you’ll say anything. You’ll talk about anything. It’s crazy, right?

I still to this day, don’t know how; but somehow, I mentioned during that first interview that my wife was a church organist. I don’t know how that came out, but it came out, ok? So I go back home, Betsy says, “How, how was the interview?”

I said, “It’s ah, I think I have a chance. We’ll see.” About a night later, it was not more than a day, the phone rings, and it’s Reverend Bob Case from Alpena, Michigan. And I don’t know Reverend Bob Case from Alpena, Michigan.

I said, “This is Greg.”

He says, "Can I speak to your wife?"

I'm like, well this is pretty far out. "Ah, Betsy, the phone's for you. It's someone from Alpena."

She says, "But you haven't got the job yet."

I said, "I know, just take the call."

Bob Case, found out, you know how small town word of mouth is, that, that comment I made about having a church organist wife, leaped out of the interview, got around town, the Congregational Church needed a church organist, now here comes the delicious part- Bob Case hired her over the phone! Now keep in mind, I still don't have the job in Alpena. I, I did the first interview, between the first and second rounds, Bob Case hires my wife to be the church organist at UCC.

She hangs up the phone, she says, "Well you better get that job."

I said, "Why? What if I don't? Wha, wha, big deal, we'll just keep going."

She said, "No, because I'm going to Alpena." (Laughs)

So the tables turned. Here I was telling her, "You're going to have to resign if I get this job." And in the wink of a phone call, it was the other way around, "You're going to have to resign if," you know, "Betsy's going to Alpena." And that's a true story. But that's small town for you.

CK: And she's still there!

GA: She's still the organist, she's been twenty-five, twenty, well actually the whole time we're here-so 28 years something, she's been the organist, and she loves her work. Loves it! Yeah. But isn't that ironic how it worked out. So I went to that second interview. Oh was I nervous! Because I had to get it! It was all on the line, you know? And luckily it worked out.

CK: Was this Thunder Bay Junior High?

GA: This is the old Thunder Bay on Second Avenue.

CK: On Second Avenue.

GA: Yep, yep, I did three years there, as what they called "the whip". You know, that terminology is *long* gone because we don't even see assistant principals as disciplinarians anymore, it's a whole 'nother way of looking at public education. But when I got here in '88, um, things were pretty rough, and they needed someone to be a disciplinarian and kinda get things back under control. So, that three years was pretty challenging for me at, at Thunder Bay Junior High.

CK: It's ssseems almost contrary in a way, I just, I think of musicianship as being this sort of a more creative, free flowing, right?

GA: Oh, I see.

CK: And suddenly, you're in this very,

GA: Ohhhhhh-

CK: I don't know that there's a parallel there-but it just seems.

GA: Well, I'll tell you what people fed back to me, is that I knew how to talk to kids, and I knew how to relate to 'em, and I could, they didn't, once, you know, they were afraid of me until they got into my office and then when we worked through issues and their problems-

CK: Mmhuh.

GA: I did it in a way that *was* not confrontational, that *was* not authoritarian. But that was in the privacy of my office. Out in public, the taxpayers expected me to be, you know, hey, keep the lid on that place; because junior high kids are something else. (Laughs) I love them, but a lot a people don't have any ah, patience for -em.

But I think it goes back to my, my music history- is like I told you, I was a kid in an adult world. So, when I got this job here, I used all that knowledge of what it was like as a kid to perceive adults, and now I was the adult, and I was working with eleven, twelve, thirteen year olds. And I think my music background really helped me-

CK: Ok.

GA: -be a, be a better assistant principal than I would have been otherwise.

CK: So what happened to music during those years? In-

GA: Well, I will admit, there were times, there were like weeks and months went by, when, certainly the first year here in Alpena, I never did much of anything musically; but I, I commuted back to Detroit, and I had to. My father passed away right before- he passed away in '87, and I took this job in '88. There were still ah, gigs that my dad signed contracts for that I had to honor. Even when I was in Alpena yet, I was still racing back to Detroit on weekends to play certain gigs that I couldn't get out of that my dad had booked. So, so yes, I still played, but it certainly wasn't like I was full time. I had a full time job up here.

Um, Interestingly enough, when I came to town, there was a show, as I came in August, that ah, the piano player quit. And it was, it was, oh it's not in here, it's in the other scrapbook. It was ah, it was *Working*, the name of the show was *Working* and it was at, it was at ah, Thunder Bay Civic Theater. So I will admit that um, just getting to town, I had to play a show right away; because they didn't have a piano player. So, but yeah, it kind of laid a little bit, but that's ok.

CK: Ok.

GA: Yeah.

CK: And then, were you involved in any sort of way with the music program at school?

GA: Certainly. Yeah, no. Once I got to the high school . The junior high, you know, that's a rudiment-, the music classes and the band, and everything is at a pretty rudimentary level. Not that, not that the kid's weren't any good, there were some fine musicianships even at that, at that level; but when I got to the high school, I transferred to the high school in '91, and I did my whole, the whole rest of my career at the high school. Certainly, I was in the band room a lot, oh yeah. I goofed around with the kids and took some kids under my wings and...we'll tell that story, there some fabulous musicians who've come out of that program, but, but no doubt about it, I, I spent a lot of time in the band room. And, and, you know, I thank all those band directors for putting up with me- cuz they knew I was having fun, and hopefully, I helped them along the way.

CK: Mmhuh. Who were the band directors that you worked with?

GA: Oh gosh, you're gonna do this to me! Dean Christopher was there when I first got here, and then, oh, wow, after Dean, after Dean I ended up hiring the rest of them.

CK: Ok.

GA: So um, Barry Wentz, ah, oh gosh, I-

CK: I don't mean to put you on the spot, I was just was kinda trying to get a timeline.

GA: Certainly Barry Wentz, and, and, Bonnie Moor, were my best hires.

CK: Ok.

GA: They, they were just fabulous ah, band directors, ah, ah, Bishop, Matt Bishop was in between there, I hired him. Ah, there was a few others. MaryAnn Hubbard ended up at our junior high school- oh, did she do a great job! Um, so-

CK: Her dad taught at Cass Tech.

GA: Oh yes he did! His dad knew my dad. Oh yeah, yeah. That was, that was really rich to meet her, and find out her dad was who he was; because her dad, judged my bands when I was a band director in Dundee and New Lothrop, he was on my judging panel, all the time. Yeah. So, good ole Henry was there, and I said, "You're his daughter! And you're here in Alpena!" and that's a rich thing, because my wife and her are both best of friends.

CK: Ok.

GA: And my wife is in her flute quartet. MaryAnn Hubbard has a –

CK: Windsong?

GA: Windsong, yeah, yeah, yeah. So that turned out really well. But I want to tell you about how it all started. This is, now we're at the point where I really wanted to come here today, because this is the part that nobody knows about, that you gotta hear.

CK: OK.

GA: Are you ready?

CK: I'm ready!

GA: Here it comes. Believe it or not, it all has to do with that band shell. When I got here in 1988, I had to live in a motel, for quite along time, because my wife was selling the house down there. So we, we were in transition. Once we moved into our house on State Street, we're, we're at the corner of State and Hitchcock, so literally-

CK: Right across from Bay View Park.

GA: Right across from Bay View Park. Right across from the tennis courts. But from my porch, I can actually see the band shell. Now, that's the good news. Here's the bad news. That entire first summer and then the next summer, there was nothing going on at the band shell. I couldn't believe it. It was-

CK: But it was there.

GA: It was brand new. There was no berm, it was flatland in front of it, there was no sound system, there was no nothing. It was just the brick, they had built it, I think, I think the car dealerships got together. I mean, I mean, if you look at the plaque, I think they're one of the main people. But there was a lot of donations, it was donated- that, that, that band shell was not built like, by taxpayer money-like, like city funds. It was, it was donated by the City of Alpena; but it laid fallow that whole first year and a half I was here. Believe me, it, it was just empty. There was, there was no city band, there was no, there was nothing. And that's where I said, "This is a shame, we gotta do something. We gotta get music up on that band shell." And I went to the city, I complained about, like, there was no sound system, I complained that they should have put a hill in front of, and they said they had, that was in the master plan, they'd get to it when they got to it. I said, "Well, get to it! You, you really can't have a concert there. If you have a hill, it'll, it'll be a evocative; it'll be an amphitheater."

And sure enough, the bulldozer showed up, and they spilled the dirt, I was happier than a pig in mud. I'm telling you. So here's what, here's what happened.

Maggie Lamb and I, Maggie Lamb is a, a and, and her, and her husband Jerry Lamb, were music entrepreneurs. They really didn't play music, but they loved music and um, they, ah, I met with them and I said, "What if we, just kind of took over the band shell and made it our project and started putting live music in the band shell.

And they said, “Well let’s do it.” And they fronted some money and you can see here in the scrapbook, the very first anything at that band shell that was, that was a dedicated program, where Alpena started to find out that hey, there’s something going on, on a certain given day during the summer, at the band shell. The very first of that was jazz, we, we called it *Jazz in the Park*. It was 1991 and we played the inaugural. It was Mike Jones, Mike Jones is from Alpena; he’s a fabulous clarinetist, and my wife played it, I played it, we had um, we had just great musicians-

CK: Don Deadman?

GA: Don Deadman was on it, we had-

CK Bob Dunstan?

GA: We had a bass player friend of mine from ah, from downstate, from the Detroit area. It just- it was a marvelous thing. Well it went over pretty good. And um, from then on, we just started doing, we called it *Jazz in the Park* and we just did it. We had, we had donation buckets, and we made do. And, and, a lot of the gen-, a lot of the financial support came from Maggie and Jerry Lamb.

So that’s- once that started up, of course, it got, and we had a few, ’92 was good but this August one in ’92, it was rained out and we ended up in the Episcopal Church. Actually Nate Montgomery played that one. You heard him the other night at, at ah, so that’s the same guy you heard. That’s him quite young-(looking at scrapbook), and it just kept going from there-

CK: He looked pretty young when I saw him the other, I’m surprised he’s-

GA: Yeah, so after *Jazz in the Park* started up and people started using the band shell knowing that it was there- and, and, you know we got a sound system, we got a berm made, that’s when I joined Thunder Bay Arts Council. And I said, “Hey, Thunder Bay Arts Council, yes, I love painting, I love dance, I love symphony orchestra stuff at the high school, but darn it all, you’ve got to broaden your base of arts to include folk and to include, ah, what do you call it, not domestic, this whole project, is called ah, what do you call it- local musicians- what, what, there’s a word for it that I’m trying to dig for- ah, indigenous-

CK: Native.

GA: You’ve got to, you’ve got to, to honor and support indigenous music in your own community. And the way you do that is by hiring them and paying them money to do their art. And music is unlike the other arts. You don’t hold it in your hands, it’s in the air and it goes away after its done, right? So I convinced them to take over. Maggie and I had this *Jazz in the Park*, I, whatever we called it, *Jazz in the Park*, I convinced Thunder Bay Arts Council to take it over. We stopped doing it and then as a board member on, on Thunder Bay, I still, still did all the bookings for over a decade, and we called it, we called it, *Music in the Park*, or something, ah, I forget what, yeah, Thunder Bay Arts Council presents “*Concerts in the Park*.” So it started out as “*Concerts in the Park*” and certainly by mid, mid- 90’s it was now a Thunder Bay Arts Council thing.

CK: OK.

GA: And it was my joy. I, I booked everything; I, I was the M.C. It was basically, I was in charge of it, and I loved it. And I did it, I did it for longer than I probably should have, um, and I have every single year, every body that ever played it, it's all in this book.

CK: Ah this is a treasure.

GA: Yeah, so you'll have copies of it.

But the big story is that that band shell thing, that we, that Maggie and I worked on, it burst open the live music scene. It wasn't just about the band shell, there was no live music at, at The Pump, there was no live music at Chief's there was no live- all the bars in town kind of gave up on it after the disco thing happened in the late '70's and then through the '80's- I don't know why, I wasn't here; but live music kind of died out. The Thunderbird, Thunderbird, what was that, is that the restaurant, Thunderbird?

CK: Mmhuh.

GA: -the one that burnt down? They had live music with Don Deadman, they had-

CK: The Cheerful Earful.

GA: Yes, they did. So that was that era. And when that died out-

CK: I think part of what happened, at least this is what I'm understanding from some of the interviews I've done-

GA: Yeah.

CK: -is that when the drinking laws-

GA: Oh, that had a lot to do with it.

CK: -that had a lot to do with it;

GA: Yes.

CK: because people weren't going out to-

GA: Yes, yes, and then the right -to -work laws, cuz when Engler came in, he changed all of that. The, the musician's union- The American Federation of Musician's and the Detroit one, just about went kaput because of the right- to- work laws. There still is a union, but it's mostly for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra members, and that's basically it. It's kinda sad. But anyway, yes, things happened in society that caused live music to kind of disappear, and so when I got here in '88, it was very sad. But, once we started, I started hiring local bands to play that summer concert series in the park-

CK: *Jazz in the Park-*

GA: Well, the bands, yeah, bu, but after Thunder Bay took it over we called it *Concerts in the Park*, so it became country, anything and everything. We had the Petoskey Steel Band one year.

So it widened out and what happened was, I think I lit a fuse, and bands started forming. ~~You know,~~ the premier one that, that, that is most representative of what happened is Bobbing for Piranhas.

These, these, kids started when they were in junior high school. And I booked, I actually booked Bobbing for Piranhas to play a high school KAPUT activity night.

Another huge thing happened, that I want to get into this project; because it's a huge story- and that's the Guitar Summit story. Ah, the Guitar Summit was my baby. It, it's, it's still to this day I see it as my legacy to Alpena. What happened was, when I was on Thunder Bay Arts Council, ah, they were going broke. They weren't making money on any of their events. Why? Because they were getting grants to, to fund their events. So they would have an event, it would cost so much money. They would bring in The Interlochen Orchestra or they'd bring in a dance troupe, or whatever. Pretty highbrow culture, right? But they, their gate receipts, the number of people in the audience, that, those ticket sales were not covering the cost of the performers. The di-,but they didn't go broke; because the cost was made up by grant money. So at best, they were breaking even. And when I got on Thunder Bay Arts Council in 80-'89 or '90, I really stirred it up. And some of the gray-haired ladies were really upset with me because I, I just told them flat, I had, I had all these years of experience as a music producer, and, from, you know, learned it from my dad, did it down in Detroit. So, I knew how to do all that, the business side of entertainment and booking shows and producing-being a producer.

So I told them, I said, "Look, you've got to again widen your scope so, you can, you can have some events where the gate receipts will pay for the event, and you'll make, are you ready for this- a profit." Oh, they couldn't understand that! So, I said, "Trust me," I said, "Give me one shot, let me do one..." This is now, not, this is now at the high school as part of their season ticker, ok? So this is an evening performance indoors. And I said, "Give me one of those, and I'll prove to you that you can, you can pack the place and you'll make money."

"Okay Greg, well what are you going to bring in? What's it gonna be?"

And I said, "It's gonna be a guitar summit."

Oh boy, oh boy. That was, that took a- that was a hard sell. I said, "you got to have local people, you've got all these musicians, I knew Bobby Riggs (sic) and, and all the guys in the Frost- they had stopped working. They were not, they weren't even in a band anymore. I called those guys up. I said, "Bobby, I says, "look, just do me this once, we're gonna try it. Just get the band back together- The Frost- and we're gonna put it up there and we'll see what happens." Well, the rest is history.

The first Guitar Summit ah, sold- all of the Guitar Summits have sold out. All of them have. And it was ah, we just kept doing it, and doing it, and doing it. This is way back in '98. There's-

CK: Where, what venue were you using?

GA: We were using Alpena High School Auditorium.

CK: Ok.

GA: And what happened was, once again, once the musicians knew that this was going to happen, they started practicing more. They started gigging more. They started going to the bars and playing and it got to be- you know, here's Pete Vanvlerah, W. C. Lewis, these are all ah, Alpena musicians. Here's Randy Bouchard headlining. Here's Dr. Jim Weeks and um, Dr. Dave Larkin headlining. Here's um, ah, here's, here's The Frost in, in 2003- The Frost headlined Guitar Summit. And after they did that? They played The Brown Trout Festival every- I mean- they took off!

So you get this train of, of, you know, the chicken and the egg. The, the first egg was the band shell; then I took it to Thunder Bay Arts Council and we got Guitar Summit, and then from there it went to Brown Trout and then they had to get a small tent and a big tent. And they got Hal Neiman to- thank god for Hal- because another music entrepreneur, another music angel, I don't know if he plays anything at all, but he just invested in musicians in Alpena- hired them to play the sm-- the small tent at Brown Trout Festival for fifteen years was completely funded by Hal Neiman, Neiman groceries. Oh yeah, yeah. Everyone played it. I played it, everyone, my son played it. Everybody did.

So it all just, it just kind of took off. And then, I sat back after the like the 2000's came and I said, "Well look at now- we've got live music back and, and then, and then Bobbing for Piranhas, you know, I just can't say enough about those kids. Be-kids- they're older, they're in, past college now, but they, they're so good. And they wouldn't have happened had they not rubbed elbows with The Frost or with some of us that, you know, older guys, that, you know, we taught 'em tunes or gave 'em tips on how to do things. And now, Bobbing for Piranhas is better than any of us. I mean, it's, it's frightening, how good they are, and you- Nate Montgomery is another example, you know.

CK: They mentioned that in their concert.

GA: Yeah, well, there you go.

CK: About mentoring and how-

GA: So The Guitar Summit was huge because it got Thunder Bay ah, Council to be, to be solvent, and it opened up live music for local people and, and Thunder Bay Arts Council fulfilled their mission. (Looking at scrapbook) Here's Guitar Summit IV, ah, you'll see Erik Satterly on bass, he's a local musician, um, Kevin Mousseau, ah, here's the next one, ah. You can see a lot of these I played as the backup drummer. There's Donny Hartman, there's Donny Hartman. Larry Daoust, and, for my money, Larry Daoust is the best guitarist that ever came out of Alpena. Maybe Nate can give him a run for his money; but Larry Daoust is, is an animal on, on guitar. Um, there's Donny Hartman again. There's ah, the other, there's Larry Daoust. Um, and then, and then ah, Nate came home more than a few times to play The Guitar Summit. Ah, so it's quite the story, it's quite the story.

See, here's another highbrow thing where we had Andrea Arbuckle on violin and Dennis Diemond on saxophone. So, and then, Guitar Summit IX or X. or XI, we, for that one year we stopped calling it Guitar Summit. We hired the Douglas Family to do Guitar Summit, and they complained. They said, "Look, it's not about guitars, we got fiddles, we've got banjos, we got all this stuff, so we changed the name to Douglas Family Extravaganza. So, when you go through the history of Guitar Summit, you're gonna see a missing Roman numeral. That missing Roman numeral is The Douglas Family Extravaganza. And then it, and then The Guitar Summit, Guitar Summit picks back up.

Um, ah, I booked "Sounds of Sinatra" to come in 2002, it was packed. It was just packed. Um, so now we're into a different thing.

CK: Now this band-

GA: That's my band.

CK: Ok.

GA: Popadamus. I should say for, for the tape, that my last name, everybody up here calls me Adamus (ad'-uh-mus). The, the, the correct pronunciation of my last name is Adamus (a-dah'-moos)

CK: Adamus.

GA: I'm Polish-American and you, you, with every Polish name, the accent goes on the penultimate syllable, so (pronounces) Kieliszewski, Kowalski, whatever, so if you put the accent here, A-dah'-moos), the correct way to say my name. So, ah, this band, Popadamus, I hope you can figure out, I called it that because it plays pop. So, is there, is there a jazzadamus? No, because I haven't, I don't need to market it. Cuz jazz is such a small niche, I just tell em, "Hey, I play jazz", I'll show up. But for Popadamus, because that music is classic pop and rock hits from the 70's, 80's and 90's, I, that's what I market, so I call it Popadamus. So Popadamus has played Alpena; but Popadamus is mostly a Detroit band. I, I'm blessed to have friends still in Detroit, and I have an agents in Detroit who still book me. It's incredible, I've been up here for longer than 28 years, and I'm still getting calls from my agent friends in Detroit to play gigs.

CK: Do you play with a few different bands don't you?

GA: Oh yes. Abs- Oh gosh, yeah. I'm a freelancer.

CK: Swing Shift Orchestra.

GA: Swing Shift- we've played a lot. Oh yeah.

CK: The KEG Band?

GA: The KEG band- how do you know that?

CK: The internet.

GA: Oh, ok. The KEG band isn't in this scrapbook, because that's the Detroit scrapbook. But if you want the Detroit scrapbook, it's, it's bigger than this one. I didn't bring it with me, um, so, ah. We played downtown Alpena, we played underneath the ah, the, the red light at, at the corner of Chisholm and Second Avenue.

CK: Mmhuh.

GA: This is us in the street. Ah, those, those downtown -and now, and now Chris, Chris Crown, is that his name? He's now, he's now the next chapter of the Alpena music thing; because Chris Crown came back to town and went to the city council and got the permit and whole structure to have street musicians. So, my way of thinking, I look at Chris Crown as the next me. Chris has done for music in the last five or ten years, than I, than I, than anybody has, really. So yeah, that's a big deal, he's a, he's a great guy.

GA: So, and then, you know, we still have summer *Concerts in the Park*. So even though they took over Guitar Summit, we still have- now here's, here's an Alpena band *Concert in the Park*-Norm Seiss.

CK: Norm Seiss.

GA: I played drums with him all over Michigan.

CK: Mmhuh.

GA: Ah, um.

CK: I have interviewed Norm.

GA: Ok. And then one summer, this is, this is a collage of a summer music, by the radio station, so I should add, so once Thunder Bay Arts Council had real success with, with Music in the Park, then the commercial people took that over.

So now, the radio station's- and you know what we have now. We have Friday nights. And we have oh my gosh, I mean they have the big money. So they're bringing in, you know, the Bob Seger imitators, The Beach Boys, The Beatles, so now, it's really, it's crazy. I can't even step foot on that stage anymore. I'm not good enough anymore. Where as before, it was an empty stage and I was begging people to get on it.

But this one is interesting- I forget the name of this group- it might be here somewhere, but, um, they were playing the, the summer concert, and the bass player, I don't know if he, I think he was diabetic and he went into like a coma. They, they had the rehearsal, they had the sound check, and the bass player, bass player got like seriously sick, and had to be rushed to Alpena General Hospital. I was actually not even planning to go to this concert. I was sitting on my porch and somebody who knew me, came running across the street to me and said, "Greg, they need a bass player- the show must go on!"

And I am like, “Come on, you’ve got to be kidding me.” So I got out my keytar, which is, you wear it around your body and I played one finger note, you know, I played a bass line, and I sat in with this band. Oh, did I have a ball! And it was a, it was a Motown rock and roll band, real high powered. That just goes to show you, here I am in a small town, and if someone would have said, “Greg, these things are going to happen to you.”

I would have said, “Never in a million years.” Because in Detroit, that kind of stuff happened all the time.

CK: Mmhuh.

GA: But, but it actually happened here in Alpena too. Um, and there’s the steel drum band. I actually ah, sat in in vocals, I actually played tenor with them and I sang with them. Um, and then downtown, we had some gigs downtown, here at the bank. I wish they’d do more of that here, around the fountain.

CK: Mmhuh.

GA: I wish they’d do that more. There’s another great ah, trumpet player Gerard Ahlgren- fabulous player . This guy is, I can’t think of his name right now; but what a harmonica player. And this guy just moved out of Alpena- he owned Music and More. Um, I’m not gonna think of his name, darned it! Ah, oh sugar! Anyway, he’s fine, he’s now on the west side; but he was a, a great player here in Alpena. Ah, this is Denny Diamond, another great player that lives here in Alpena, at the John Lau Saloon. We played the Lau Saloon a lot. Played New Year’s Eve there. Ah, there’s Art in the Loft with Nancy Everett- I played Art in the Loft a lot. We played a political party for Denise Burke at, at um, Bob Courier’s house. What a night that was. Here. here’s why that gig sticks out- of all the gigs I’ve played in my, I’ve played all over the world, I, of all the gig’s I ever played, I never in my life was able to walk a hundred yards to my gig. (Laughs) Cuz Bob Courier lives right across the street from me at the end of the park, and he had his own grand piano, he had a, he still has a grand piano in his front room, so I didn’t have to take any equipment, I literally, put on my tuxedo, I said goodbye to my wife, and I walked like, a minute to my gig. First time it’s ever happened in my life.

Um, oh, we did a, we did a drum circle for ah, ah, deaf students.

CK: Oh, cool.

GA: You would, you would think- how in the world, are you crazy? You’re gonna go do a drum circle for deaf kids? We did it. And they loved it. They simply watched us and they felt the vibrations.

CK: Mmhuh. Mmhuh.

GA: And it was the most wonderful thing- Avery Aten and I did that, Dr. Aten, who’s quite the musician! Oh! You’ve got to interview Avery Aten. He plays hammered dulcimer, he plays ah, he

plays recorder, he plays, he plays anything- you've got to interview Dr. Avery Aten- he's quite the musician. Um, he's retired now, so he's got time.

CK: Ok.

GA: Now this is getting into, into now recent days, ah, Dan Ager and I did a, a ah,-

CK: I've heard a lot about this.

GA: - a lecture at the museum, for, about the Beatles, so that was that. It just goes on and on. All right. All right. Now- I'm glad we got to this page. If I, if you were to say "Greg, what's the highlight of your musical life?" And you would have thought that I would have said something that happened in Detroit, you know when I was playing with the big dogs- or something on Mackinac Island or something- no, no, no, no, no, no, no. The absolute highlight of my life, if you had to narrow it down to one song, it was right here (Knocks on table) in this library. Alpena community, Alpena Library-

CK: Wait, is that Ernie Harwell?

GA: That's Ernie Harwell.

CK: Oh my gosh!

GA: and Ernie Harwell-

CK: That would be the highlight of my life too.

GA: And Ernie Harwell, did a book, did a book, and he came to the library to talk about his book, and wouldn't you know it? And I, I, again, I just came to his lecture. I wanted to find out-I love Ernie Harwell, he's my, my hero of all time. And I'm sitting there eating a cracker with him- it was before the thing started, and I'm eating a cracker with him, (In Harwell voice), "Hello there young man, what's your name?"

And I just, I just started shaking, I heard that voice.

"Mmmmmmy name's Ggggreg Adammmmus."

He said, "Oh your Greg. I hear- you play piano, don't you?"

And I said, "Well yes, Mr. Harwell I, I, I, try to play a little piano."

He says, "Why don't we thrill this crowd and play 'Take Me Out to the Ballgame' and we'll sing it?"
Oh my god!

And that piano, had just gotten there, the new piano, in the library, in The Judy Stillion room. Would you believe it? Ernie Harwell took me over to the piano and said, "Any key, any key, just start playing." And he sang over my shoulder. I, I was in goose bumps. I was the most nervous...but

that is the highlight of my music career; because when you've got Ernie Harwell in your ear, and he's, he's yelling at the top of his voice, "For it's one, two, three strikes you're out!" And it's the voice of Ernie Harwell, that is, without a doubt, the highlight of my musical life, and it happened right here at this library. How do you like that? I'm so I remembered to tell that story.

CK: That's-

GA: Um Bill, Kaltrider, we did, we did a concert together, got all my dad's horns out. Played, I played trumpet, clarinet, flute, sax, accordion, we, we, literally played everything we, we owned. Both of us. What a night that was! Bill Kaltrider is the organist at the Episcopal -It was just, it was for ALL.

CK: Ok.

GA: ALL hosted it . Yeah, you know you gotta have a sponsor for everything you do. Now here's another huge gig I played for fifteen- twenty years- The Chocolate Extravaganza. Ah, God bless um, all those people there at the Episcopal Church who, who, always invited me to come play that thing. Ah, this is Kat Tomaszewski playing at one of them. There's a better picture of her here. Um, so, ah, ah, Alan Egan was mostly responsible for the music, getting that together.

Ah, there's just so much, ah, here's Christmas Eve, this is my church now. I did a lot of church, obviously, at my church, I perform a lot, cuz Betsy's in charge there and she let's me goof around when I can.

CK: Mmhuh. Mmhuh.

GA: Um, I wrote some songs, um, "Call to Worship", on a Thelonius Monk melody. (Sings) We came to praise God, Alleluia! We come to give thanks, Alleluia. And it's, it's written- the melody is written by Thelonius Monk. And then I did a, um, Duke Ellington melody, and I called it "Sophisticated Benediction." (Sings) Amen, we bid you Amen, go in the name of Christ and then, we'll see you right back again Amen. So I, I was allowed to do some pretty crazy stuff in church. Ah, but this is the best one. We, I took "Our Father" and I took a Sonny Rollins, Sonny Rollins, calypso tune called "Saint Thomas", which was religious in the first place in my defense, and I put the "Our Father" to the melodies. So it's, (Sings) Our father, who art in heaven, alleluia. Bum ba bum bum. Hallowed be the holy name, alleluia. Thy kingdom come (Taps melody) thy will be done, on earth and heaven, alleluia- (Chuckles) We got the whole church doing it.

This was a great gig, this was ah, ah, the, the elementary schools were doing the World War II, so they hired Nancy and I to do all World War II music. It was a fabulous thing we did.

CK Are you talking about Nancy Everett?

GA: Yes!

CK: Could you talk about, give me just a little background on Nancy Everett?

GA: Nancy Everett is, here's, here's my connection, I'm glad you asked. Nancy Everett and I go back to 1988. How did Nancy and I meet? When we, when you, back then, when you came to town, as a new person, and you were gonna be in Alpena- they had a Welcome Wagon. And anybody new to town that month, got together for dinner. And Nancy Everett was in my "class" so to speak. The class of-

CK: Newbies.

GA: -the class of newbies. And so, we had so much fun, the Chamber of Commerce people said, "Well you know what? Since you're new to this town, you don't know anybody, you would be the perfect judges for our Christmas light contest." So they put us in a van, and Nancy and Betsy and Nancy's husband Richard, the four of us, we were driven all over town to look at houses with Christmas lights. Well, I can't tell you all the story, because what happened in the van, stays in the van. But, but we had such fun! We didn't even know we were musically connected, but we, that's how we met. And then so, we started talking and she had mentioned that she had sang with Count Basie and done all these- oh yeah, oh yeah, so, so, yeah I booked her a lot, we played a lot of gigs together.

CK: Is she still around.?

GA: Yeah, she's here. She, I just, I haven't seen her recently; but she's still around- absolutely! We actually, I actually you talk, you asked me about being a, a school principal at a high school- I actually played the prom. In 1998, there was a group called Half Brassed, and they didn't have enough tunes to last the night. They only had like, like, five, six tunes. So I said, "Look, I'll show up, I'll do the vocals, just play a behind me, and we'll last the night. And we actually played the high school prom at the old Armory. That was before, 19, actually this was the last year. After 1998 it move to the ah, Civic Center. And I was really proud to be able to say, "Ok, I played the prom at the Armory; because for decades, I mean whole generations remember the prom at the Armory.

CK: What were the acoustics like in there?

GA: It didn't matter., it didn't matter. If you remember your high school prom, it doesn't matter.

Ah, Jesse Besser Museum, did a lot of work for Jesse Besser Museum, musically. I ended up on their Board of Directors, and, and, served a good term there. Um, this is ah, this is all Besser Museum gigs. A lot of those were pro bono. A lot of, a lot of the stuff I did, I, I made my money on Mackinaw Island and in Detroit. Did I get rich in Alpena as a performing artist? No. I should say for the record, "Hell no!" I didn't. But you know what? As long as I had Mackinaw Island, and as long as I had Detroit, that's where I made my killing.

In Alpena, because it's your hometown, you have to play freebies. And when I played the Chocolate Extravaganza, when I played the hospital fashion shows, oh, I can't tell you how many hospital fashion shows I played. Um, and then, and then for this library, for the museum, all those were freebies. It was worse than freebies; because sometimes I committed to showing up to those, and I

wanted things to sound good, and I actually hired musicians out of own pocket. Not only was I not making any money; but I-

CK: You had to pay them.

GA: -was paying. Because you know, then the A-list crowd is there, like especially for the hospital gigs and the museum, I wanted things to sound good. Now yes, it was advertising for me, it was marketing. So even though I played those freebies, and, and, as, as musicians listening to this, need to understand there's a lesson there. If you do it right, it'll come back to you tenfold. But you, you can't give yourself away, you can't, talk to any artist, whether it's a sculptor or a painter, you just can't give it away for free all the time; but you have to be very judicious; but it's important to support the non-profit entities in your town as a working musician. And that for me boiled down mostly to the hospital, the museum and this library. And there were others; but those were the big three. So I, I played a lot of those, because I, and you know what? When you, when you, play for nothing, and there's no one breathing down your neck, you tend to have more fun.

CK: You get to let loose.

GA: You get to let loose, you get to play the tunes you want to play, no one can tell you what to do, they can't tell you what to wear,. So, so, there is something about pro bono gigs. There's something about it, yeah. So- Oh, Mike Jones came back to Alpena and did a thing with Dr. James Dapogny. Dr. James Dapogny is an internationally renowned pianist. And I was thrilled and honored to play drums behind him. This was and Mike played clarinet, one of the highlights of my Alpena time. Mike, is just something else.

CK: When was this-

GA: This was-

CK: -roughly? Just a few years ago- 2013.

GA: Oh, did we have a time with that. I worked hard on that.

CK: Now who organized this?

GA: Ah, I don't know. Oh! Thunder Bay Arts Council.

CK: Oh, ok.

GA: Yeah it was Thunder Bay Arts Council. There's a spaghetti dinner at the high school gym. It had nothing to do with the high school, but it was a spaghetti dinner oh it was for Lisa Bourchard. So, there's an example where I hired four musicians and myself, and I hired them, and we played the spaghetti dinner for free. I'm not braggin'. I'm just saying that's a perfect example. That was a fundraiser, this gal was really sick-

CK: Mmhuh.

GA: And, and so I said, “Sure, I’ll be there.”

Ah we actually played for the school board once. At work, sometimes at work, my music came into play when we had the teachers returning after summer break- we would do something on stage and this one year, ah, a bunch of administrators got together and we, we sang Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody” – I’ll give you a taste. (Sings) “Is this in service day? It’s not a fantasy. No it’s state law, no escape from reality. So, wake up you guys, look up here and listen to me.” Ok, you get the idea? “Mama, just spill the can, now its time to use my head, if I don’t I could be dead...” It’s, it’s I look at it now and I’m embarrassed.; but it was funny at the moment.

GA: This is me conducting the high school band with Bonnie Moor. She was so good to me. She was so good to me. I wrote countless letters of recommendations, to countless seniors who wanted to go into music, you know, who needed letters of recommendation and I, I , stopped, whenever someone asked me, I stopped everything I was doing and I prioritized it and got it done. Because, because, someone had to do it for me and that’s the pay forward thing. So these are just examples of, of different people asked me about another young person they were thinking of, of getting into a college.

This goes, this is probably the oldest page, this page should be at the front of the book. This February, 1989. And this is, there she is, there’s Nancy Everett and there’s me. She was the vocalist, and I did vocals, and Don Parrish was the junior high band director, sitting right there. This is old- this one of the first things I did in Alpena-

This is later now, this 2013- the, the, ACC started doing a jazz band as a class.

CK Oh!, Okay.

GA: So I actually performed some of those, this is just one of them-ah, the Spotlight Series.

CK: Tell me a little more about that- they offered a class?

GA: Yes, yes, yes. Bonnie Moor taught it at the college for college credit. Yep. It lasted, I think, two or three years. And I’ll, we’ll save that for the very end of this tape-

CK: Ok.

GA: Because there is an ending here, that I will tell you about.

CK: Ok.

GA: And then we’re back to the library. And we’re back to your project- look I even have a page, the thing I did when I sang-

CK: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

GA: -when I sang for that.

Ok, so that's it. So let me end with this. You're not gonna like this. I fear that everything I told you, was the upswing, and I do fear, as a, as an old curmudgeon, that we're on a downswing. And I'm, I'm, I'm rather upset about it. The reason I'm upset, and the reason I would characterize the last couple years and the future as another downswing, is because the high school lost it's jazz ensemble, we don't, it's, it was a class during hours, then it went to, I don't know if it was before school or after school, and then it disappeared completely.

The college lost its jazz ensemble, it's gone, completely and utterly. Ah, the, the, when we talked about indigenous music and we talked about folk music or music in the town or contemporary music, that's where the next generation came from, and I can prove that to you, by offering up Bobbing for Piranhas as an example, or the Douglas Family as an example, or Nate Montgomery as an example. All those people, who are now adults, and have come back to Alpena, Mike Jones- is another example. Those people all came out of, you know, back when Archie Best was the band director, back when, ah, Dunstan, Bob Dunstan, all the great band directors, back in the '50's and the '60's okay? They created the Mike Jones's and Nate Montgomery's of the world- who then enriched Alpena musically. I am sorry to say, that incubator is gone. Its, its, totally gone, it doesn't exist; because we no longer have a jazz ensemble at either the high school or the college.

Ah, so that bothers me a lot. The other thing that bothers me is because of that, again, its, it just, just it grows from there- because of that, there are no more young bands. There is no replacement for Bobbing for Piranhas. Bobbing for Piranhas is now, at least at the end of their college years, if not already graduated. In fact, Ethan now works for the credit union in town. Um, so that band, I don't even perceive as a, as a young kid band anymore. They're, they're grown adults, and they play like grown adults- they're darn good. But, there, trying to find, let's say my sons were graduating from high school tomorrow, and I wanted to get a band to play, like I did, for my kid's graduation party- there are none. There are no high school aged kids, that, that any of us know about, that are, that are a given band. I can't, I can't sit here and tell you a name of band- there, there are none.

Ah, so this is worrying me quite a bit, um. And then when what's his name left town- the guy I can't think of - owned Music and More- he was teaching private lessons. Don Deadman had been teaching private lessons, I had, my wife was- we all kind of retired- we don't teach private lessons anymore and, either that or the people who did, have left town. So there's this really, there's a draught.

And, and, I'm very worried like right now. And my cure for this is, we've got to do something about the schools. We gotta get it back into the schools, because that's the incubator. And if we don't we're gonna, we're gonna hit the same dry spell that I encountered when I came in '88.

CK: What's it gonna take? To get it back in the schools?

GA: It's gonna take funding; because the reason why its gone is because they can't support the hiring of a full time band director, because they don't have the, the wages, the money, and the

budget, to give that band director a full load. So then they gave Bonnie, three-quarters of a load, then they gave her half a load, and then finally, when they gave her two classes, she quit. We're talking about one of the finest band directors in the state of Michigan. And she walked away from it because she was only teaching, it was like, "Come on, give me a break, I'm not even *half*-time."

So, what's it going to take? It takes, like everything else, it takes money, and you've got to support the arts and that starts in the schools. Now, there's a whole 'nother story that you'll hear from the choir people. And I don't even want to go there. It's very sad. But talk to Jeanne Morrow, who had the best, I mean, Jeanne Morrow was the high school choir director pretty much the whole time I was at Alpena High School, except for the last five, four or five years. But she was in the heyday, I mean, she had four different choirs, she had a handbell choir, she had, oh, I, I can't tell you all she had. And now, I don't know what it's down to now; but, I, I don't know if they're teaching choir more than two hours a day.

CK: What's the program like in the elementary schools?

GA: What program?

CK: There's nothing?

GA: As far as I know, I know that beginning band used to start at fifth grade, then it started at sixth grade, I don't know when it starts now. I doubt there's a sixth grade. I really doubt it. I don't know for sure. You'll have to talk to somebody. You gotta remember I've been retired five years.

CK: Mmhuh.

GA: But, to come back to my ending point here, take my word for it, I'm at the center of it all, as far as knowing the people, and booking people, and events, it's, it's definitely on a huge downhill cycle, and I don't know what to say. I don't know.

I don't, I don't play out here- in Alpena anymore. I'm, I'm playing in Detroit basically, and on the west side. I played, New Year's Eve is a perfect example- This New Year's Eve I played at Bay Harbor, which is that development between ah, Charlevoix and Petoskey, it's a real nice place, she did me really well, paid me really well, I had a nice gig, I couldn't, I tried, before I took that gig, to get a gig here in Alpena, for New Year's Eve. And it didn't happen, because no one was doing anything. The big gig in Alpena was at the A-Plex for New Year's Eve, and it was packed, god bless 'em, they had an outside, they hired a downstate band to play it. Did a lot of local musician's that I personally know, sit home on New Year's Eve- yes? On, on New Year's Eve, here in Alpena, Michigan, some of the best players, players better than I, sat home and watched the ball drop on TV, they did not-. In Detroit, everybody played on New Year's Eve, every year, all the time. I mean, I, New Year's Eve was just a, a, a gift for me- you know? That's like the number one booking date for musicians' and it, it, the example here in Alpena just goes to show you, something's wrong.

CK: Well there's been a lot that has been revealing to me in this interview.

GA: All right.

CK: I interviewed AK Best that was my-

GA: He's the man.

CK: - earliest siren for what was going on here-

GA: Yeah, he's the man,.

CK: And ah, I can only hope it takes a turn in some way or another.

GA: Well see, that's just it. Archie Best was a catalyst. And he was that good, and then when he left town, it kind of, the pendulum swung, you know. And then Bonnie, it sounds like Bonnie, was-

GA: Well, Barry before her, Barry Wentz really, ah, was quite the, the director, musically, he really took the bands to a whole new levels, and then Bonnie either kept them there or made them better yet. So there's, there's quite a story there.

CK: Do you have the sense that people in the community have this picture, that they?

GA: They certainly don't; because it's an inside picture, you know, you have to be in the business to know-

CK; To see it-

GA: To know, to know the pulse.

But, but, here's what I'll say about it, directly to your question. The Alpena audiences have a thirst for it. They love live music. Look at the A-Plex. Every single band at the A-Plex, and every single band at the summer concert series at the band shell, all of them- are out of town bands. Every single one of them, ok? That's cool, because it, it gets Alpena audiences to see live music and experience live music. Sooner or later, that taste will hopefully cause people to hire local talent. Maybe for their own weddings, or their own parties, or whatever. And maybe the bars, the bars are doing all right right now. In fact last night, two nights ago ah, Dan Ager, and my, my best friend, Wayne Kendziorski, you talk about a superlative musician- Wayne Kendziorski is the guy I wish I was. If someone said, "Greg, musically, if you want to live your life over, what do you want to do?" Just tell me what Wayne Kendziorski did, because that guy, he's such a player, and he's such an entertainer. Anyway, he played Chief's Bar Saturday night, and here's the funny thing about that. At least Dan Ager, if not somebody else at Guitar Summit Saturday night, had to leave early because they had to go play Chiefs, with, with, Wayne. So yeah, the bars are still happening.

But I think Alpena audiences, non-musical people, people who just, Mom and Joe Pop Alpena, I think they would love to hear more local live talent, live music. Um, I don't hear deejay's anymore in Alpena. It used to be, when I got here, that's another reason we were at a low end; because there *were* deejays. Club 32 was the worst, they, they, they. You know Club 32 went bust, and when I

drove by and saw the “For Sale” sign, I, I was fist pumping. I was, yeah; because when I got here in ’88, they had the disco ball, they had the whole thing, and they had guys, with record machines, and there was no live...they took away all that live music market for disco. And it lasted for-

CK: That’s right, Friendly Bar.

GA:- three or four years, and then it went kaput, you know? So, let’s hope, I can only hope; but again, unless you feed the pipeline with young people, and the young people aren’t getting it; because it’s not being taught and it’s not being, the passion isn’t.... you ask any of these people in this scrapbook who went and attended Alpena High School, or Alpena Public Schools. Every single one will tell you, the spark was lit by some music teacher, in school, during class. Without a doubt. Now for me, it didn’t work out that way- I had my family. You know, I had to bear my band directors when I was a kid. It was like, “Ok, we’re gonna so this again.?” You know, you know. Except my high school guy. I liked him. But anyway, yeah, it’s a good question you asked me.

CK: Well, Greg, it’s been very insightful. So again, my legacy, when I’m in the old folks home wearing diapers, someone’s gonna ask me, “Greg, what’s it all about, Alfie?”

I’m gonna say, “When, when I left Detroit, God was with me and he took me Alpena, Michigan.” And I thought I was retired. When I left Detroit, I told my musician friends, “That’s it. I’m done. I’m retired. You want to buy my horns? Don’t call me. I’m done.” And come to find out, my legacy is not there. My legacy is up here in Alpena. And I’m damned proud of it. And to go to Guitar Summit Saturday night, I had a frog in my throat. I was in tears most of the night; because I thought, “Hell, I created this?” And it’s morphed. I can’t, Guitar Summit isn’t even what I created, really. Because it was on a stage when I did it. And it was ins-, indoors and there was no beer, there was no, ah, what are those burgers called?

CK Tony burgers.

GA: Yah. So imagine how I felt Saturday night. And you know what? I, I leaned over to Betsy and said, “This is all for the good.” It needs to be, it needs to morph and be different.

CK: Mmhuh, mmhuh.

GA: Frankly, I wouldn’t have liked it that way; because I’m a purist, and I wanted music to be- you don’t eat and drink while I’m performing. This is a concert! You know. That’s the way Guitar Summit- I envisioned it. And now, it’s totally different and I thought I’d be mad. No. I sat there with tears in my eyes Saturday night. I did. I did. And when I’m at home, and I hear the band shell crank up, so, but when I hear it, and I, in my, because I can hear it from my house, oh boy! I hear the drummer warming up- boom, boom, boom, boom; and I just smile to myself, and I say, “Right on.”

CK: That was a good testimony, to the range of people, just in the audience at guitar summit, really,

GA: Did you notice?

CK: I was really impressed.

GA: Age wise and gender wise and yeah. And even socioeconomically- there were A-listers, I call them A-listers, its an old, it's an old term going back from, to Detroit. You try to market toward the A-listers because they were the people who will pay for entertainment. But in Alpena, the A-listers are people who are more well-to-do, the business owners, the professionals, and at the Guitar Summit Saturday night, I noticed socioeconomically, the A-listers, there was a balance of those and there was a balance of, of, of working class people; but what was even more miraculous- is they were sitting at the same tables. It was not just that the whole crowd, spectrum was there. The whole spectrum was there, and they were mixing. And they were dancing with each other.

CK: That was so cool.

GA: That was -it's funny you should draw that out of me; because I wouldn't of, that's something I wouldn't talk about; but I've noticed it. I've noticed it.

CK: Yeah, yeah. It really made an impression on me, it's like, "Wow, everyone's here."

GA: Yeah, yeah.

CK: So cool.

GA: Yeah. You let your hair down. It's time to just be. You know, music is the great equalizer.

CK: It is. It is.

GA: You let your hair down.

CK: Yeah.

GA: Yeah.

GA: All right. We got to go.

CK: Thanks. Thanks a lot.