

Maureen and Mike

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**Interviewee: Shawn Swagerty**

**Interviewer: Sylvia Arvizu**

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Shawn Swagerty: [laughs] I was a big music fan. I was born in '61, and in 1965, I remember my brother pointing at the television and yelling, "The Beatles!" Then when I was about five or six years old, this TV show called The Monkees came on, and I got really interested in rock and roll. By the time, I was in high school, punk and new wave had started. I remember sitting in front of the television one night because, of course, we didn't have internet and we couldn't really get access to any magazines. So, a lot of the new stuff that we experienced had to come through the television. There were shows like the Midnight Special with Don Kirshner's Rock Concert that we would watch every Friday night. We, meaning the young high school kids in Montana at the time. One night they played...One night in 1978, they played a clip by Devo. It was *The Complete Truth About De-Evolution*, and it was the song "Jocko Homo." I guess I was a junior in high school, and my head pretty much exploded when I saw that. I just was so excited. I ended up writing a review of the Devo album for my high school paper, and then I wrote a review of it for the *Havre Daily News*, which was the daily paper up in Havre. I think it's still a daily paper up there. I just became very excited by punk and new wave. My parents had bought me a subscription to *Rolling Stone* magazine, and they were doing articles about The Sex Pistols, and The Ramones, and The Clash.

I was really interested in finding out a lot more about that, and of course, the arts was always fascinating because when you're a kid in Montana, you don't really have access to much information the information. The information that you would get was something about the New York art world. Of course, I knew about Andy Warhol and the Warhol '60s and that crazy stuff. I just really wanted to connect in some way to that. Writing is something I've been doing all my life. My father always encouraged me to write, and my mother did too. They're both very good writers even though they never wrote for publications. When I got to University of Montana, I started reading the *Kaimin*, and I thought, well this is very impressive. It's on newsprint and everything, and these writers seem very impressive and like adults and I doubt that I could ever do that. I ended up doing it because I thought—

I don't know if I'm getting ahead of myself

Sylvia Arvizu: It's okay.

SS: But your next question, did you plan to write for the *Kaimin*? No, I hadn't planned to write for the *Kaimin*. I was studying Latin and Greek during my first couple of years, and so that was very difficult course of study and I didn't have much spare time. But I saw that there was this Battle of the Bands coming up at the Wilma Theater, and I thought, well, I guess I wonder if anybody at the *Kaimin* is going to cover that because I'd really like to cover that. I walked over

to the journalism building, and I left a note in the mailbox of the person who was the fine arts editor at that point. Said, 'I'd really like to cover this. Would you call me up and tell me if that's okay?' So, he called me up, and I went down to the Wilma Theater and watched this all day extravaganza and wrote it up as my first article for the *Kaimin*. They gave me a nice two-page spread, and I was really pleased with myself so I was sort of hooked.

SA: I see. Then from there, you just started...did you just start freelancing for them before you became part of the fine arts editor? And mostly was your stuff music, or was it all music because I did see an article for piano? You made a small little article about a piano concert.

SS: I was mostly interested in rock and roll and punk, but by the time I became the fine arts editor which I think was probably not until spring of 1981 or something like that. Maybe it was winter of '81. Because like you said, I had been freelancing for a while. They called me up in the fall of 1980 after I got back from summer vacation, and they remembered that Battle of the Bands article. They said, do you want to write some more for the *Kaimin* so just started getting articles about whatever I was interested in, punk or reggae, or I would go see some bands and write about them. The Details were a very early punk band; Surfer Ruth was another band. But as far as when I became the fine arts editor, I was getting an actual check. I guess the Associated Students of the University of Montana were paying the salaries of the *Kaimin* staff for certain editors. It became more of a job, and I took it really seriously. I thought that if the music department was going to send me some a press release and it ended up in the mailbox of the fine arts editor or the art department was going to send a press release, or the dance department, that I should probably go cover it or have somebody else go cover it. I started covering everything out of a sensible obligation whether I knew anything about what I was seeing or not. Some of the articles are pretty well informed, and some of them just are a dumb college kid seeing a dance performance and trying to make sense of it. But I tried to cover everything.

SA: What was your favorite...Like you said, your favorite was the rock and the punk rock, so I'm just gonna backtrack a little bit. What was your favorite band that you first heard when you went to the Battle of the Bands? And why?

SS: I had gone to this dormitory dance, and there was a band called Time that played and they were brand new there too. I was just impressed because they were playing covers of Joe Jackson and Devo, and they played a bunch of rock and roll too. But I just I was impressed with them just because they had so much energy, and they were from a small town. They were, like, from Conrad or something, and they'd gone down to Missoula, but they were interested in the same sort of music. When I saw this Battle of the Bands coming up, I decided to focus on them as the focus of the article and just kind of track their progress through the Battle of the Bands. That's how they became the focus, and they eventually ended up winning it.

Probably the most interesting band in that particular Battle of the Bands was the one called Just Ducky, who were Missoula's first punk band and maybe Montana's first punk band. They

weren't very good at all, I'll say, [laughs] but they came on stage and it was just pure outrage and shock. They were the last band to play because the promoters were obviously very afraid of them and what they would do. The first thing that happened was you saw somebody's bare ass poking out between the curtains, and then the guitarist, Dan Walseth—and I later became very friendly with him—he crawled out of a garbage can. They just bashed through these awful songs and were just terrible, but the guy, who was the main engine behind that, was a person that I didn't get along with when I met him later. But he ended up being a very prominent record producer, musician named Steve Albini. He produced, yeah, you probably heard about him. Maybe you're going to talk to him. [laughs]

SA: One of our students is going to be speaking to him.

SS: Yeah, he was kind of a pivotal guy at the development of all this. I really didn't get along with the guy then, but I mean we're fine now. We're friends now. [laughs] just young people when they have a lot of energy and I think this is probably particularly true of males where we're trying to prove ourselves, needlessly competitive instead of understanding what maybe the other person is actually great.

SA: Is that what led you to for your band Ernst Ernst, or did you already have your band before you came to the university?

SS: I'd always wanted to be in a band, but covering all these other bands and having played music all my life...Covering all these bands, it was more covering bands like Surfer Ruth and Who Killed Society that kind of persuaded me that I should probably try to make music too. Though Ernst Ernst started out as the solo project with just me on the stage at The Forum and a little Casio calculator drum box. The songs were pretty good, but the performance was pretty awful. People politely sat, people sat through it, but the band didn't really come together until John Kappes and Brad Walseth joined as the bassist. Later Wally Erickson from Who Killed Society joined us, and it really became a good band then—if I do say so myself. The next year we played us played a few shows and got a following, and that was a lot of fun.

SA: Yeah, because I saw your article when the...your band was breaking up. Well, not breaking up; it's because you had to do your studies. So, my question would be then, was that by choice?

SS: Yeah, I think so because at that point I decided that I really needed to get out of Missoula and go off to Washington D.C, because this girl that I was interested in had moved out there. She, in fact, had been in the band Just Ducky with...She, yeah, she was in the band, but she quit because the atmosphere was so disagreeable. But yeah, it was by choice. I really did want to finish up my degree and get out of the town and see what I [unintelligible].

SA: And head out to Washington.

SS: Yeah, and it seemed like the band was done. I mean, we'd had our fun. That little project [unintelligible].

SA: Okay, so you didn't see it as taking it for a career?

SS: I think I had the illusions at that point that it might be possible, but by the time I got out to Washington D.C., it became clear that I wasn't really a band person. I was too introverted. I didn't want to go out and go to band practice and meet a bunch of new people.

SA: I'm going back. You referenced Surfer Ruthie [Surfer Ruth]. You did quite a large article on Surfer Ruthie. What can you tell me about her because or about them because apparently that was...When she passed away, you did, like I said, a whole page spread on her. I guess I've heard things and I just kind of like to hear from your side on certain things.

SS: Okay. Well, yeah, that wasn't actually a person. That was just a band—

SA: On a dorm floor. On a dorm floor, if I'm not mistaken.

SS: Yeah, right. Yeah, they were in Elrod Hall, and I don't know if Elrod Hall still exists. It was the first dorm I landed in, and I had a lot of fun there. I met those guys in Elrod hall and started hanging around them. They were kind of a great amalgamation of all sorts of influences. They were like—I don't know if at the time, there was kind of a lot of animosity between punks and hippies. [laughs]

SA: No.

SS: Yeah, it was...I mean, this was nation-wide, punks versus hippies. [laughs] Missoula, of course, was and is still very much a hippie town, and I hope I'm not using that term too negatively because I like Missoula hippies. Yeah, we went down...A lot of people showed up there just wanting to...I mean, punk had had this edgy attitude, and we just wanted to be something different than what had happened before and that was completely different from disco and different from heavy metal and different from the Grateful Dead and all this hippie. But the thing about Surfer Ruth is they'd bring in all of these different influences. They mixed the hippie with the punk with the new wave stuff, and they started out as a cover band. They would just play covers mostly down at the Top Hat.

They were these two kids from Helena named Richard Kline and Joey Mockler...No, Richard Mockler and Joe Kline. Let me say that again. Richard Mockler and Joey Kline were these two kids from Helena, who'd been active in bands and things back in Helena. They came to Missoula, and they had a lot of energy and a lot of creative genius. They started the band Surfer Ruth. They would play at these venues like the [unintelligible] and the Top Hat. They played a lot at the Top Hat, and they created this nexus of people, who were just really fun, cool people

to hang around who all became friends. The value in Surfer Ruth was, not only the music, but also the cultural nexus they created amongst all these people in Missoula.

SA: So, it was kind of a following that was created then?

SS: You got it exactly.

SA: Like I said, did you guys would join in and play with them, or just follow them?

SS: I actually got up on stage with them a couple of times. [laughs] They were much better musicians than I was, but other musicians around town would get up and play with them a lot like Andre Floyd (?). I think he's still around Missoula. He played quite a bit with Surfer Ruth. The punk bands would always invite—if the punk bands had an open spot on a bill for an event that they were doing, they'd always invite Surfer Ruth. There was a guy named Randy Pepprock. Randy Pepprock was in all these bands: The Details, Who Killed Society. He was always gathering some [unintelligible] or something to have a punk rock festival, but he was also very inclusive. If Surfer Ruth showed up, he'd say, yeah, come on and play.

SA: Then my question would be then because I know you kind of wrote some articles because back then you'd have like three bands playing on a Saturday and Friday night, and even at the university on different venues. I remember you would write, and sometimes there was a controversy over what you liked and what came out on the editorial section. Can you elaborate a little bit on those situations. I believe one was like Loverboy and then the other band, which is the local band that was playing out at the stadium, I think. I can't remember exactly. Can you elaborate on those kind of the inner politics of the music and the bands?

SS: [laughs] Well, that was really funny. Yeah. Loverboy was a national band that played at the Field House. I don't know if the Field House is still there. But they played at the Field House with a band called Quarterflash. I just really hated it. I hated that kind of music, and I hated all the people who were there, and it just being so stupid and shallow and mindless. Everybody was really drunk and stoned, and I compared it to a Nuremberg rally. A lot of people—people who were into promoting that kind of music, like the people at the local rock and roll station which was called KYLT at that time, just playing all this bullshit and top-40 rock and roll music—and people who had a financial interest were really pissed off by the articles I wrote. They would write to the *Kaimin* and say Shawn Swagerty is just a dumb jerk, he hates good music, and they're making music off of the advertising. I just thought it was really funny; I thought it was hilarious that these people were getting so angry. As far as the advertising, and as far as whether there was a conflict between the advertising and whether, yeah, advertising or who was promoting the event, [unintelligible] content. When I was the arts editor, I would say, no not at all. I didn't even pay attention to the advertising, and nobody from the advertising side of the paper ever talked to me about that

SA: Okay. Yeah, because that was kind of interesting. You had more jazz and blues advertisement, and then on little corners here and there you have kind of the Old Saloon, the Carousel. Then of course, your articles come in. So, that was the reason why I was kind of wondering, and now with the explaining that bit about the...I guess the money and Loverboy and the outside. How did you feel how it's become considered the underground that music?

SS: Well, that's a good question. [long pause] I still see it in this town. I live in Portland, Oregon, now, and there's a very similar scene going on where all these really wonderful bands are playing and they're playing in people's houses. We did that back in Missoula too. They're really not getting any press coverage. We have two weekly papers here, and one is called the Willamette Week and one is the Portland Mercury. They're just really not covering this amazing micro-scene that's happening that's kind of like what the punk scene was back then. and I'm probably backtracking a bit here, but I thought it was really—

SA: That's okay.

SS: I thought it was really my obligation to kind of expose what was happening in Missoula with this underground stuff, and it was underground because nobody was paying attention to it. I thought that people should really pay attention to it because there was really something special that was happening. That's what I think is going on here in Portland now, and I've got a radio show and I try to expose some of these bands that aren't getting enough attention, that are just doing really wonderful things. So, yeah, I think the underground is where creativity happens, and then the media or the press like me here pushes it out to the mainstream. Then the people who are making the music sometimes become more commercially successful and the music becomes more homogenized, and it's up to the next generation to create something new and special.

SA: Let me see. So, what kind of...it's kind of along the same line. What kind of legacy do you feel this has left for Missoula considering some of the venues still exist, are still today being used, but of course different music?

SS: Yeah. I don't know. I've gone to the Top Hat, and it's completely different now. It used to be a ramshackle place where you'd go and drink in the afternoon, and you'd be lucky if somebody swept and the chairs were all rickety. But you could go see good music at night, and there were [unintelligible] dance. No, it's [unintelligible] for touring, commercial acts. So, I don't know where the locals are going. I don't know, okay, the Top Hat still exists, and the Wilma still exists, but they've totally changed in character. There was a place called The Forum that doesn't exist anymore, which always...We always had the luck because it had good owners and good managers, so we could always get our kind of music in there regardless of who was touring through.

There were house shows; there was a guy named Mark Grove, who lived...I don't know. He lived kind of over by where the old county library is, and he'd invite bands into his house to

play. They became really terrific parties, and all the best shows were at Mark Grove's house. Unfortunately, he died maybe 10 years ago from complications due to diabetes, but he also used to [unintelligible] fun guy. [unintelligible sentence]. Those were really fun. So, I hope house shows are still going on there, but I don't know if that would be because of our legacy. I hope we helped open up things for everybody else who came along. The kids would come to Missoula college and look around and say, well, we can do anything we want to. We don't have to have a lot of a lot of backing from money or managers promoters do this. We can do it ourselves.

SA: Yeah, because, like I said, I don't really see a lot other than the standard venues. The university doesn't seem to have concerts coming in and going out, like they did during your time.

SS: Oh, that's interesting.

SA: That's the reason for that question.

SS: Yeah, yeah, back then the university used to have a budget, and that would be part of the students' activity fees is to promote these shows. Then maybe the university would actually make money on them.

SA: Okay. Now, a little bit off the subject because I found it kind of interesting. All your involvement with the punk rock and everything, is what, I guess, interested you running for the ASUM president? Even though you were disqualified because I think your last 30 names were, how do we put it, I think German and Indian chiefs or something.

SS: [laughs] Oh yeah, cartoon characters, Disney characters. Yeah, but that's definitely related to the punk rock thing. That was a big punk rock prank, and we just had so much fun doing that and pissed so many people off. That was probably the punkest thing we did is "Destination: SUCCESS!" I've got some old materials related to that that I could send you if you want, but yeah, that was really funny. I don't know if you found the letters to the editors during those, but yeah [unintelligible].

SA: Yeah, you had a lot of support.

SS: Yeah, I did have a lot of support, but it also made the right people very mad. [laughs]

SA: Okay. I guess that was the reason for it is to punk everybody. Was the ASUM president then exactly as you stated, because I believe he did re-win when you did that, when you did that punking.

SS: I'm not sure. I can't remember who won, but they were all a bunch of these conformist, business major kids, who were just total idiots and completely in it for their own



aggrandizement and power and their ambition and to make their parents proud of them. So they were just...yeah, whoever did win for president of that year was just an ambitious schmuck you can count on it.

SA: Yeah, because as I said, I didn't memorize his name, but I remember reading that. I thought that was interesting that you were punk...into the punk underground, and you're going to a straight ASUM president type.

SS: [laughs]

SA: I believe there were two of you that were doing the whole thing, your manager and yourself.

SS: Yeah, there was this guy Richard Mockler who was running for vice president, and he was actually in Surfer Ruth too. He had the best lines in the interviews; he was the one that talked about eliminating the Women's Resource Center and using the funding to—I don't know, set up a cocktail lounge or something and moving the buildings on campus together. He was a more sophisticated satirist in that situation. But yeah, we did get a lot of funny people along for the ride on that.

SA: I would really appreciate if you would send some of the stuff because that was definitely something I would like to put up, because up at the ZAAC of one of the panels about how the punk, punked the university.

SS: [laughs] Okay, yeah, I'll be happy to do that.

SA: Did you do any other punking, or is there any other good punking stories that happened during that time that did not make the *Kaimin*?

SS: Oh, my gosh. I'll have to think about that. I'll totally have to think about that. One thing I should tell you that didn't make the *Kaimin* and didn't get mentioned in the movie about the early Montana punk scene, and didn't get mentioned in any of the articles, was that Randy Pepperock and Wally Erickson used to make these huge silk screen posters to promote the punk shows. You'd go to sleep one night, and Missoula would be a sleepy hippie town, and you'd wake up the next morning and these massive posters—these massive punk posters of Richard Hell with his fist raised and other stuff like this—would be pasted up over all the buildings in town. So, Missoula went from being, would go from being a hippie town to a punk town overnight. It was really a remarkable thing to wake up to that kind of décor; it just transformed the city. I'd say what Wally and Randy did is really underappreciated. Of course, all the building owners got pissed off and get the cops after them to arrest them.

SA: Did they ever get arrested?

SS: No, not my knowledge.

SA: Did they get fined?

SS: No, I don't think they ever got caught. Wally, who was the drummer for Who Killed Society and later for Ernst Ernst, he and his brother had a big station wagon. I don't know if this was worth mentioning, but it came to mind. They had a big station wagon and they spray painted an anarchy circle A on the front hood of it. They used to drive it all over town, and they would knock down stop signs all over town with their big, old junker car. I don't think they ever got arrested for that either.

SA: So, nobody could ever figure out why the stop signs were all knocked down.

SS: Right.

SA: Okay, let's see, on my questions—okay, you've kind of answered quite a few of them. Let me see. Okay, you told me what you enjoyed most when you're writing is going to see the bands and writing about the bands. What was the most memorable band or incident other than that first time you saw the first punk band play in Montana at the Battle of the Bands? What other one was the most memorable, I guess, and why?

SS: Oh, boy, I would say there was the second Battle of the Bands. I mean, it all goes back to these big things where there were a lot of people. The second Battle of the Bands was where Who Killed Society played for the first time, and they were very good and they were very confrontational. All the heavy metal kids and the hippies in the audience started throwing nickels and bottle caps at the stage, and the band just kept playing. It was like the audience had never seen anything quite like that, and the band was just there to confront them and make them more angry. Randy was saying things into the microphone, like, piss off you fuckers. [laughs] Then they'd [unintelligible] through another great song, because they were very good. I thought that was memorable.

Then a year a year later at another Battle of the Bands, there was the actually an incident where—I don't know who the band was, maybe it was Deranged Diction, it was a hardcore band—they used to open for Ernst Ernst. Later, one of the dudes [Jeff Ament] went on to be in Pearl Jam, but it might have been their band that was playing or it might have been Who Killed Society. Anyway there was...No, this was at the Carousel. There was an American flag on the stage, and one of the punks who was dancing pulled the flag down and started dancing around with it. Then this biker dude wanted to wrestle him for the flag, so there was a big wrestling match over this flag and a lot of hostility and animosity and threats on the way out.

SA: So, in other words the punk band here was kind of the, not the outcast, but the people that were really, really being different compared to like when hippies started way back in the late '50s and early '60s. Is that how the punk, I mean, how the punk scenes began here?

SS: I think that's how they saw themselves.

SA: That's how they saw themselves, okay.

SS: Yeah, I don't know how much of that was real because non-conformity is a very easy trick. [laughs] Later, everybody gets on the bandwagon, and suddenly non-conformists are conformists.

SA: I see. So, when you left here to go to Washington all that, were you now ready to be a conformist or a non-conformist?

SS: Oh, I always imagine myself continue being a non-conformist, I suppose. I've had various corporate jobs over the years, but I've always tried to do something that was creative. I don't know that I was definitely going against the mainstream of anything, but I always just try to keep my creative orient in some way or another. I was definitely; it was easy to go to D.C. 1980 and be anti-Reagan's because Reagan was awful. [laughs] Reagan did inspire some of the best punk music.

SA: So, without Reagan there would have been no punk music?

SS: It would have probably taken a different turn without Reagan. Yeah, without Reagan in America, without Thatcher and England, I think it would have taken a different turn. It would have taken a far less political bent. I mean, it was mostly about heroin and girls when The Ramones were starting, and Johnny Thunders and those guys. It might have continued to go in that direction instead of a more political direction.

SA: Okay, that would be interesting today if people were...because you don't see as much bands starting up in home bands—at least that I know of right at this point—home bands. The way you have like it seems starting back up in Portland.

SS: Oh, that's interesting. Yeah, that's too bad. Yeah, house shows are wonderful. [laughs]

SA: When you did the house shows, were you usually going to the same homes? Was it something that was just word of mouth the way the raves are, or was it advertised? How did the house, like even when you went to play at some of the homes, how did that work?

SS: Yeah, it was all word of mouth back then. I mean now it's the internet. People post that they've got a house show on Instagram and send me direct mail for the address of the house. But back then it was just like you would tell all your friends to tell them to tell everybody, and so or yeah, you'd make some calls and say we're playing at Mark Grove's house. The house shows I was at were always at Mark's house, and they didn't charge any money. People would bring their own booze and pot, and they would have some food there. Mark and his girlfriend,

whose name I've forgotten sadly—I think she's still around, it's terrible that I've forgotten her name. If I find her name, I'll send it to you because she was just as important as Mark in getting these things going. I'll ask somebody what her name is and send that to you.

SA: Okay, I appreciate that. What was your favorite venue when you weren't going to houses or staying on the university for bands? If you just wanted to go on a Friday night to catch some music, what was your...Because there doesn't seem to be that much advertising, like I said, in the *Kaimin* about the venues, except maybe here and there. So, it kind of makes you wonder how students got out there and where they picked and where they were seen mostly.

SS: Right, my default was the Top Hat because that's where I thought my friends would be, and if there was a band I wanted to see, they'd be at the Top Hat. If there was a band playing at the top half that what wasn't when I'd want to see, the atmosphere would still be good.

SA: How were the venues divided up? In other words, Top Hat would usually be punk; the Wilma would be playing what? Or was it all just depending on the on the month or the weekend?

SS: The Top Hat would be mostly hippie with some new wave stuff, but the Top Hat was, that was mostly the Lost Highway Band—they'd be holding down the fort. They were really good bands too. They were more along the Bruce Springsteen cover, cover some [unintelligible] Rolling Stones, Grateful Dead type of thing, and they wrote some really good originals. The Forum, which was across the street from the Top Hat, was known for having these skinny-tie bands, these new wave boy bands—some of who existed in Missoula and some would go on a tour of the northwest. So, they'd come through and play all these mostly covers from originals, but they would mostly play like The Cars or covers of Joe Jackson or The Vapors. Occasionally we'd get a punk show into The Forum there, but the Wilma was showing mostly movies then. There were very few actual concerts there, although the Missoula Symphony would play there and there would be some classical concerts there. But it was very, very rare to have a pop concert at the Wilma. It was mostly just movies, which was wonderful. I mean that was a great place to see a movie. There was a place called the Trading Post Saloon, where you'd get some heavy metal with play and some skinny tie-down band would play there, but small metal bands small love metal bands like Prophecy and stuff like that.

SA: So, basically your punk scene was mostly the homes then?

SS: Quite a bit, yeah. Oh, let me add that there was a storefront that was really important called Urbane Renewal, and Urbane Renewal opened up in about oh, late 1980 or early 1981. This woman named Lya Badgley, whose family is still in Missoula—I think Chris Badgley is still in Missoula. But she had gone off to Seattle and become a sophisticated new wave person, and so she came back to Missoula and briefly opened up this shop called Urbane Renewal. She had a lot of good, original clothes that she designed and new wave records. She was kind of pivotal in helping a lot of these punk and new wave bands to start going. Later when she sold the shop to

this guy, Rick Landini, who might still be around and he had a show on the radio station. I guess it's KGBA now, but it was KUFM. I don't remember quite what the things were, but he invited me to play for Lya's homecoming party and this was in the fall or winter of 1981. Lya was coming back to town from Seattle where she moved again, and he was going to have a party for her. Because he had remembered Ernst Ernst was a one piece with this Casiotone and me playing, this fancy little atmospheric guitar stuff, but we brought the whole band and just really bashed it out and surprised him. So, he started having bands at Urbane Renewal, and for about a year Urbane Renewal became the chief venue, which was a clothing store and the record store. We'd move all the clothes and records out and just set up in the front of the store, and a couple hundred people would come and pay money and see it. It was great.

SA: That sounds like a homegrown kind of place to play.

SS: Exactly. It totally was yeah.

SA: That's I think what made that scene because you didn't have overhead.

SS: You're right.

SA: Okay. [pauses]

This is one of my questions. If you're gonna go back to the music scene, back then to the '80s, what would you do different or change? Or would there be anything that you would add to it, or you would just leave it the same and why?

SS: Oh, boy. I think I'd leave it the same but me personally I think I would just try to take it a little less seriously and understand that although it might be very, very fun, I really wasn't that important. Just the collection of people was more important, the activity itself was more important, if that makes any sense. No, but I would just leave it the same because it was a blast; it was a lot of fun, and I still have very good memories of it.

SA: And still were able to graduate college and go on to a career somewhere.

SS: Yeah, a bunch of different careers. [laughs]

SA: Well, I think that's just kind of the age that, I guess, you work through because of the different economies. So, then a lot of these people that you mentioned, do you still see them, get acquainted, or has everybody kind of drifted into their own worlds?

SS: I do see a lot of them. Let's see, [pauses] I'm most in touch with Joey Kline and Richard Mockler from Surfer Ruth, but I'm still in touch with Randy Pepprock, who was in Who Killed Society. I'm still in touch with Brad Walseth, who was the bass player for Ernst Ernst. I haven't talked to Wally Erickson or John Kappes, who were also in Ernst Ernst, for quite a while, but

there are some others that I'm still in touch with, yeah, and I still see them. A couple of them live in Seattle, one of them lives outside of Missoula, some are still in Montana, one's in Chicago. They're scattered, but you see each other. Seattle and Portland are pretty close.

SA: Okay, all right. I guess we kind of covered everything that I had written. I guess, my question would be as we've gone through, you have come up with things that you remembered, but what else would you—during that time frame because like I said it was a blast, you really enjoyed, it was really camaraderie (?) in the group—that you would like to add or subtract to, or anything else that you want, any other stories that you would like to tell me about in Missoula and the music scene, be it punk rock or other?

SS: There was one night [laughs] where Lost Highway Band was playing at the Top Hat. I was sitting at a table at the Top Hat with Randy Pepprock from Who Killed Society. He was really decked out in his punk rock gear, and he had this bracelet with spikes on it, and he kept bashing it into the table, and saying, "Man, just got to show these hippies." He just had all the punk rock energy, right, he was a true believer. He just really thought punk needed to take a stance in Missoula and show all these hippies, meaning the people on stage who were these perfectly nice guys and great musicians, the Lost Highway Band. Also, I think we were sitting with Jeff Ament. It was Jeff Ament from Deranged Diction, who later became famous with Pearl Jam and building skateboard parks and all this, and this singer from Deranged Diction. Randy decided...Randy was pretty drunk, and he decided he would ask the guys in the Lost Highway Band if we could get up on stage and play a few tunes during the break. They said, yeah. We went up on stage. I wasn't really very drunk. I wasn't drinking much at that point, and Jeff wasn't very drunk, but Randy was really drunk and the singer. Well, anyway, cut to the chase. We did the song "No Fun," by Iggy and the Stooges, and we did okay with that. I'd had enough, and I left the stage and I gave the guitar I was playing to Randy. Randy was just getting drunker and drunker because he was standing up and moving around a lot. All the alcohol was going through his system. They played a couple more songs, and the guys of Lost Highway Band were ready to come back from their break and they were looking pissed off that these guys were still going on and on. Finally Randy, just kind of—with the guy's guitar—keeled over. He kind of drunk tumbled and somersaulted right off the stage onto the floor in front of the stage and laid there for a few minutes. We wondered if he was all right, and he was all right but he really mucked up the guy's guitar. This really nice Fender Telecaster that he had played. That caused some animosity between the hippie faction, being the Lost Highway Band, and the punk faction being us. That took a while to wear off. Anyway, that's a dumb story. That's a stupid story to end with, but why not

SA: Well, it kind of brought one question. Real quick, the punk mentality was seeing the hippies is now like the standard. I mean, they were the regular society now? I mean you guys did these...I mean, as the punkers looked at hippies, they're now the acceptable society people. Is that how that was seen, or was it just two groups that were offshoots on the outside of society, out of the norm?

SS: Yeah, it was two groups that were on the outside, but at that at that time in Missoula the hippies were seen as dominant. I mean, Missoula was seen as a real granola-type town, and a lot of the kids who'd grown up there were just sick of all these...[laughs] I mean, I don't have anything about against hippies. I pretty much stand for what they stand for, peace and love. Who could be against that? But I think the punks just disliked their aesthetic, just it's like the hippie flower, tie-dye stuff, and the music. The punk attitude was that the hippies were just too busy getting stoned to get anything accomplished; whereas, the punks were going to use all this energy to transform society, which of course never happened.

SA: Well, you'd be surprised. I think there's some; it changed music that's for sure.

SS: Yeah, that's fun.

SA: Yeah, because a lot of it went on to be techno.

SS: Right, right. Is that what you're into?

SA: No, like I said, I'm non-traditional, so I'm still the rock and roll, but not the hippie pit. I did catch the tail end of the punk rock. So, that's the reason why I won't do my hair pink, blue, green or anything because around here that's normal now.

SS: Yeah, that's exactly. [laughs] I hear you. You're a non-conformist, yes.

SA: In a sense, yes, even though my background is very conservative, my career. My career was also. That's why I say I'm non-traditional and stuff, so I have some memory, I have some memory of that time frame yeah because I was the youngest of my family went on with that. Okay, let's see. I think we've covered I think pretty much everything that I have on my list, and I've enjoyed it. I've really enjoyed the stories. You have one last story?

SS: [laughs] No, I think I got them all.

SA: Oh, the other question was of the art, the punk rock art, do you have any of those posters by any minute possibility or know where I can locate some that Wally and Randy put out? I bet I can get my hands on some graphic files of those and send those to you.

SA: Oh, that'd be perfect. That would be kind of neat.

SS: If that would work.

SA: Yeah, that would be really kind of nice. Okay, if you don't have anything else, there's nothing on the recording that you feel that you don't want anybody to hear 20, 30, 40 years from now?

SS: No, that's fine. That's fine. Yeah, no, I don't think I incriminated myself or anybody else too much no.

SA: Nothing that I think the time frame has already passed for anything to happen anyways.

SS: Yeah, the statute of limitations for those stop signs is long gone.

SA: Yeah, exactly. Well, like I said, I enjoyed it, and hopefully I'll get to meet you eventually.

[End of Interview]