Interviewee: Lynn Langham

Interviewer: Norie Guthrie

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Interview Transcript

Norie Guthrie: My name is Norie Guthrie from the Woodson Research Center Fondren Library, Rice University. I am interviewing Lynn Langham. Today is February 20, 2017. This is for the Houston Folk Music Archive oral history project. So can you tell me a bit about your early life growing up around Houston?

Lynn Langham: Well, I grew up, I, I went to junior high and high school in Freeport, uh, went to some of my elementary years were in La Marque and, um, the rest of the time I was in East Texas. My dad was a minister and, uh, so I was the PK and nobody ever said bad words in front of me. My sister had a piano in the house that my father and grandfather had refinished for her but she didn't really take to it all that well, so when I was about 5 years old, I started playing it and because I was picking songs out by ear, I started taking piano lessons when I, I guess, they made me wait 'til I was about 8 years old because my hands weren't big enough and then I took piano lessons and she didn't. She kinda let go of it and she, she's older than I am and, uh, I have, I still have the piano. The piano is still her piano but I have custody. She, uh, she actually had a lot to do actually with me getting involved in music. She's, uh, she's 13 years older than I am and when I was about 10 years old, she and her, um, husband gave me their stereo with, I think six or seven albums. I had a, the sound, uh, I had Peter Pan, um, The Music Man, My Fair Lady. I wanted to be Audrey Hepburn. I thought that would be very cool and, uh, then I had the Kingston Trio and the Brothers Four and Marty Robins, the gunfighter ballads which, you know, is still my favorite album and, um, an album by a Martin Denny that was real kind of probably cheesy jazz now. I don't know, um, it was called Exotica. Had bird sounds and all kinds of stuff and I listened to those every night before I went to bed. I had, you know, it was the kind of stereo that you could put a stack of, of LPs on.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: So I would put about five of ’em on and wherever I fell asleep in the, in the mix, um, I heard every night and that's really probably where I started getting really attached to music, um.

Norie Guthrie: And so when did you go ahead and start, when did you pick up the guitar?

Lynn Langham: I took piano lessons 'til I was about 14.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.
Lynn Langham: And I, uh, was also taking organ lessons and I was playing the organ in the church on Sunday nights and I kind of got burn out on the piano because I realized one day I couldn't do anything but read music. I couldn't play by ear anymore and that's what had started it, so I quit taking piano lessons and my mom and dad told me that if I would save everything I made playing the organ on Sunday nights, which was not very much money, that they would match it and on my 14th birthday, first they gave me a, they, they gave me a guitar that was, it was a Suzuki guitar that I believe cost $28.00 and they said if you will learn to play this guitar, then we'll talk about a better one, but not until you learn to play this one, so I learned to play it and that's when they said okay, if you save your money from playing the organ, we'll match it and you can buy a better guitar and so I bought from H & H Music in Houston, I bought a Gibson C2 classical guitar, which I also still have. I save all my guitars, um, I don't have the $28.00 Suzuki anymore and I wish I did, but that's what started it and I quit playing the piano completely. I didn't touch a piano again for about 6 years and then when I started playing the piano again, I sat at it until I played and I never took any guitar lessons. I taught myself. I got, I had a Mel Bay chord book and, uh, I just, I think there was a guy on TV maybe that taught folk songs and, uh, I had a book of child ballads and I just taught myself how to play and, uh, it started, I got my first guitar when I was 14 years old and now I have a bunch of 'em. I also have a bunch of pianos.

Norie Guthrie: Um, so you were saying that you were playing the organ in church.

Lynn Langham: I was playing the organ in church and then with the guitar, I, uh, I guess, I went and played for church camp and I can remember I had an acapella song that I wrote that I remember singing in church when I was probably 16 or 17 called “The Sweet Light of Jesus.”

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And, uh, actually in going through archives of mine for this I found the lyrics to it. I had not even really thought about it in many years but I would go and play for church groups and, and, uh, I would play, took my guitar when I would go to church camp. I was on a youth counsel for church camp and so I would, I was going around the campfire leading the singing with my guitar.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: And then when I went to college, I started playing in clubs in Austin and then I started playing here. I kinda had a circuit for a while that I worked from Austin from here to Dallas and Denton.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lynn Langham: And I dropped out of college three times because I was playing music and I couldn't go to class in Austin if I was in Houston or Dallas and so, you know, I tried, I tried to finish college. I had five majors in college.

Norie Guthrie: What were the majors?
Lynn Langham: I just wanted to play music. Bottom line was, I just wanted to play music.

Norie Guthrie: Were you kind of, um, were you hitting the, the college coffee houses or just?

Lynn Langham: I was hittin' college coffee houses. I was hittin', there was a, a club in Dallas called the Rubaiyat.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, there was a coffee house in, in Denton and I don't remember the name of it but it was associated with the campus.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And there was one at the University of Texas but Austin also had the Saxon Pub and Castle Creek and, you know, various other places around, um, and in Houston there was Theodore's and Houlanah's and Corky's and Anderson Fair and, you know, several others that, you know, I'm not sure I remember all the names, um, but that's, you know, I just, I finally, I used to tell people yeah, I play 8 days a week because I pretty much did. I was, I was playing every night somewhere and playing spaghetti lunches at Anderson Fair at lunchtime.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And the rest of the time I was home with my piano and guitar. I, I played a lot.

Norie Guthrie: Um, so, were you more drawn to Anderson Fair than other clubs or are there ones that you were kinda your favorites?

Lynn Langham: Well the thing about Anderson Fair was it was always a listening room, you know, and, and the Saxon Pub in Austin and Castle Creek were basically listening rooms. Um, some of the other clubs, people, people came to listen but there was also, like I can remember Corky's; it was when piña coladas became the thing and I'd be in the middle of the slowest, prettiest ballad and the blender would go off, um, because somebody wanted a piña colada and, you know, they didn't make them wait.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: Um, so, yeah, Anderson Fair was great and it, and it was where we all commun-, it was like, it was the community center almost for the musicians, you know. We didn't have any place else to go. We went to Anderson Fair.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And, and there was a, Houston was a real hotbed of creative talent at that point and we were playin' essentially some of 'em are what I guess people would consider fern bars
now but instead of havin' to go in and play a lot of cover songs, we went in and played our own songs and especially played at Anderson Fair, every time I was booked there, I wanted to have a new song. You know, so it was a, it really spurred you on and, and the competition was pretty fierce. There were some really good writers here.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: So, it was and every, and everybody was real supportive of each other, which is not the, always the case in a music center. Sometimes there's a lot of jealousy, you know, I, I, I moved to Los Angeles later and when I was living in Los Angeles, you'd meet someone else that was a songwriter and they'd say well I'm a songwriter, they go oh. You know, whereas here it was like hey, that's great. In Nashville, it's like hey, let's write, you know. We didn't co-write very much, um, there were, I think maybe some people that were in bands together that wrote together, but those of us that were individual writers, mostly wrote individual, you know, our individual songs. We, we didn't, you know, some people say Van Gogh didn't co-paint. You know, we didn't co-write very much but we were very supportive of each other. If I had a new song, I had friends the first thing I did was go play it for them, you know, hey I got a new song or they'd say, hey, I got a new song and, or even if we were workin' on somethin' but we didn't actually write it together, you know, it was.

Norie Guthrie: The kinda just the kinda feeding off of each other.

Lynn Langham: Yeah, it was, it was, you know, when you have people that are that creative, it just, it just spurs you on to do better work.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: You know, and, and there was a lot of really good music that came out of here.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah, yeah. I agree. Um, going back to being in Houston. There were not very many women that were playing in the scene.

Lynn Langham: No.

Norie Guthrie: What was that like? I mean, you know, how were you treated?

Lynn Langham: I didn't really think that much about it when I was in Houston. I thought about it more when I lived in Nashville.

Norie Guthrie: Oh, okay.

Lynn Langham: Because here we were just all songwriters.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And, and I never really thought about anybody caring.
Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Norie Guthrie: You know? Um, the whole, the whole time, I mean, you know, I hung with the guys and I had other friends that were women that, that played and, and it really wasn't, it wasn't somethin' I ever really thought about, but in Nashville, it's really a good ole boy network.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lynn Langham: And there are women who break through, you know, one of the first things that hit me when I got there was I always wanted to be an artist. I didn't want to be a songwriter.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: I wrote songs because I wanted something to sing that was mine.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: You know, I wasn't thinkin' about writing songs to have anybody else record them. I still don't, you know, if somebody records one of my songs, it's probably a fluke, you know, it's great and, you know, my publishers probably would have, didn't want to hear me say that but, but they knew it too. They knew that that was what I wanted, but they liked what I wrote. Um, so to me, it, I was an artist.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: You know? Like Joni Mitchell was an artist, you know? James Taylor is an artist. Paul Simon was an artist.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: I got to Nashville and I found out that you were either an artist, which means that you were the singer or you were a songwriter.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: And you weren't supposed to be both.

Norie Guthrie: Mm.

Lynn Langham: And there wasn't a whole lot of that going on at the time.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: Um, and that kinda, you know, it was kinda like, what? You know? And I had other songwriters who wanted to be artists that would say, no, you know, you're either a
songwriter or you're an artist, which do you wanna be, you know, and that kinda took me back. And then I was at a demo session with someone, we had written a song together, and for a publishing company that was, they were really good ole boys. There's really no way, other way to put it. They were great and they had some great writers but they were, you know, like they wouldn't pitch songs to Mary Chapin Carpenter because she wasn't country.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: I mean even though she was having No. 1 singles with the guy that I wrote for, Don Schlitz, was co-writing with her and having No. 1 songs out of his company, but they wouldn't pitch my songs to Mary Chapin Carpenter and, and, uh, we're in this demo session and we just cut this song and it's pretty county and this guy sidles up to me and, and I know 'em all, you know, they're good buddies and, he sidles up to me and he puts his arm around me and he says, you know, you're the only girl songwriter I know I don't have to put girl in front of. And I was like thank you I think. So, yeah. That's the difference. That, that put it real clear, you know?

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, and I can assure you that there are a lot more men writin' songs there then there are women. But that's not to say that there aren't women and they aren't, some of 'em are very successful.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: But the ratio is, um, definitely male heavy, um. At one point their attitude was that, you know, women don't sell records because women buy records and they buy them to take them home to their husbands and they don't want to take a pretty face home to their husbands so they buy a man's record. Go figure, you know? These are things that have been said to me.

Norie Guthrie: Right, right.

Lynn Langham: Yeah, by business people.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: But, you know, I just, I don't know, I do what I do. I'll go where I go and that's what, that's what's gonna happen. I, I maybe if I had, had, had more of a specific I'm goin' here, I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that and I'm gonna do that, maybe my life would be different but I don't have any complaints. I'm pretty happy. I still get to do what I do and, and, uh, and I can still go to the grocery store and nobody bothers me either, you know?

Norie Guthrie: So, um, early on, uh, I think it's around 76, um, you contributed songs to Through the Dark Nightly.

Lynn Langham: Mm hmm.
Norie Guthrie: What was that experience like?

Lynn Langham: Oh, it was amazing. It was the first time I'd ever been in a studio. Nobody had ever recorded me before.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, and I was, you know, thrilled. I was really, really felt honored to be on that album and in that company.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And, uh, you were asking me about the songs. Walter Spinks, who helped, you know, make that happen, lives in Nashville now and he comes to hear me play when I play in Nashville and he's been buggin' me. He's like okay, I want you to learn this one, I want you to learn this one and I want you to learn this one 'cause I wanna hear them again. So, the last time I played in Nashville, Walter was there and I played it. I played “Living in the Music” for Walter, um, so yeah, it's, it's, uh, it was a real honor to be part of that. It was, it was really special.

Norie Guthrie: Do you wanna play, can play one of those songs from –

Lynn Langham: I will try to play “Livin' in the Music.” We'll see what happens.

Norie Guthrie: All right.

Lynn Langham: Uh, I actually play it on the piano now rather than the guitar.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: But, uh, I played it the other night at Anderson Fair and, uh, Linda Lowe was there and she said, you wrote that on guitar and I was like well, you know, I changed it and I don't often do that. Usually if I write somethin' on guitar it lives on guitar forever and if I write it on the piano, it lives on the piano forever, but this one actually goes both ways. But I will try. It's called “Livin' in the Music.”

Sometimes you get so tired
You feel like you’re losing your dreams
Sometimes you know the fire will burn down low
You feel like you’re losing your steam

I lost my free will a long time ago
Though I never let on that that’s so
I live in the music
It swallowed me whole
It fights down the pain in my soul
Sometimes the music so sweet
Your feeling so light on your feet
Sometimes the people you meet
Make you feel like you found easy street

Sometimes you get so lonely
No one and no place to go
Sometimes you know the cloud will hang low
You feel like the sun just won’t show

I lost my free will a long time ago
Though I never let on that that’s so
I live in the music
It swallowed me whole
It fights down the pain in my soul

Sometimes you know when I sing
It’s like riding the mockingbird’s wing
You fly with the greatest of ease
It’s better than the circus trapeze

But sometimes you get so lonely and tired
Your worn out, lose at your seams
Sometimes you know the fire will burn low
You feel like you’re losing your dreams

I lost my free will a long time ago
Though I never let on that that’s so
I live in the music
It swallowed me whole
It fights down the pain in my soul

I live in the music
It swallowed me whole
It fights down the pain in my soul

Norie Guthrie: So around the time that you did the recording, then you went off to New York.

Lynn Langham: Uh huh.

Norie Guthrie: Can you talk about that experience? Why did you end up moving?

Lynn Langham: Well, I was, um, I guess I just kinda felt like I wanted to see what the big, wide world was all about. Not that Houston wasn't the big, wide world, but I, I really wanted to go to a music business center and, and I actually was planning to move to California. I had a friend who had moved to Los Angeles and was working in a recording studio there and he was like, you
know, come to LA, you gotta do this. But I had a friend who lived in New York City at the time and she said if you're gonna move to Los Angeles, you have to go to New York first 'cause once you get out there, you'll never come back here and so you come and see me in New York and then you can move to Los Angeles. I said, okay. So I moved out of my apartment. I marked all my boxes California. I put 'em in my brother's attic and I went to New York and while I was there, um, Mara took me to The Other End, which was also The Bitter End, but at that point because of tax reasons they were calling it The Other End. It's The Bitter End again now. And, we were sitting in there eating lunch and there was a guy sittin' in the corn, in a corner booth and she says that's Paul Colby. He owns the place. You need to go talk to him and I was like, okay and she, she had pretty much pushed me out of my chair because it's not my nature to go throw myself into those situations. So, I went up to him and I said hi, um, I know you own this place and, and my name's Lynn Langham and I'm here from Texas and I was wondering if, you know, like I could audition for you and he looked at me kinda funny and he said do you know how many people wanna play music for me? He says, why would I listen to you? And I said totally out of, out of my nature, I said because you might miss something if you don't and he stopped and looked at me. He said the last person who said that to me was Jerry Jeff Walker. Be here tomorrow at 1 o'clock and I'll listen to you. I said okay. So I came in at 1 o'clock the next day and I played for him and he said okay, I like you. He said The Other End / Bitter End has two sides. One side is a listening room and one side was a, a restaurant/bar area but they had music in both sides.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And they had music every night on a corner stage in the bar and he said if you wanna move to New York, he said, first he said I have an opening next week, you want it? And I was like, I'm supposed to leave. And he said well, it's up to you. You can have it if you want it. Pays 100 bucks. I was like okay, so I, uh, changed my plans. I stayed for another week. I played the bar for a week and when I was done he said, okay, if you wanna move to New York City, I'll make sure that you have a spot in here every month and I'll put you in the main room as an opening act every chance I can. And I went, okay, so I moved to New York. It was as simple as that and he was true to his word. He actually was, kinda acted as a manager for a while and, uh, I got to open up. It was, it was funny, 'cause I was kinda on the run from country music so, you know, I'm a Texan from, in New York City, so they booked me with Larry Gatlin and Asleep at the Wheel and you know? They booked me with all the country acts. But it was okay. I had a really good time there and he treated me really well and while I was there I played a lot of other clubs. I played, there's a place called Tramps and there was a clam bar and there was a place called, um, The, The Bat, was it, Kenny's Back, I can't even tell ya, The Back Fence I think maybe was the name of it and there was Folk City and, uh, I played all around the Village and then I played several clubs that were uptown and I learned a lot you know?

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm. And what did, what did you take away from the experience?

Lynn Langham: Well I'll, I got a whole feel of jazz in the music that I had never really encountered. You know it was folkly or country, pure, you know your Top 40, but there was a lotta jazz in New York and, and I, um, I picked it up. It was, it was really kinda interesting 'cause when, when, uh, I left New York I moved to Los Angeles and I started talking to publishers, and
you know I moved from Texas to New York City where they booked me with country acts, not entirely but somewhat. I left New York. I went to Los Angeles and they said I don't know. This is too jazzy. You, you think you have something with a hook and beat? You need to work on a hook and beat, so I started working on a hook and a beat, and then from Los Angeles I moved to Nashville and they said you know I don't know, you got too much hook and beat in your songs. Can you like write some story songs? And I was like so you know I guess I've learned it all. I, I don't know. I just always thought I was just doing what I like.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And some, somebody else was putting names on it, and that's still what I do

Norie Guthrie: So what did, um, what was it like being in LA?

Lynn Langham: Um.

Norie Guthrie: What did you end up doing there?

Lynn Langham: Oddly enough I didn't feel as safe in LA as I did in New York. In New York I used to walk up and down the streets carrying $2,000.00 worth of guitars under my arms. You know I had two guitars that I was heading down the street with both of 'em. First time I tried to go to a club alone in Los Angeles I pulled into a parking place and a guy pulled in next to me so I couldn't get out and wanted me to get in his car you know so I just blasted my horn and he drove on –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – but that was, that was my entrance to LA. Later on if you want I'll tell you my entrance to New York which aside from the other and the actual driving in it was pretty interesting, but, um, LA was not as, um, it wasn't as warm and friendly. You know it was, it was, or it didn't feel that way to me.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: It was, it felt more competitive as, as in, um, you do what I do but so I don't wanna know you –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – whereas in Houston it was just totally oh you do what I do, great. Let's, let's hang you know, and in Nashville it's like well let's write you know. Uh, LA was a little more distant and that, and, and then ultimately I got married and I got pregnant and I had, um, two kids and I put the guitars, my guitars were in a closet that was in a closet, um, for about 6 years.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.
Lynn Langham: I had a whole circle of friends who didn't know that I played music. They knew that I was Heather's mom and Nathan's mom. They didn't, didn't know anything about what I really did you know. I mean they are what I really did I suppose but –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – not to belittle being a mother. I loved –

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: – being a mother but I just put it away, and part of the reason I put it away was because I was so used to feeling really on top of my game –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and I didn't have time to, to practice as much and, and work as much and I would go, sit down to play and I would hear mistakes and you know just little discrepancies that bothered me, and it was easier to not play than it was to not play well.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: So I stopped, and I was married to a recording engineer who gave my tapes to someone and I had, uh, I ended up getting a couple of single song publishing deals out there, and, and he gave the tape to, to George Wilkins who was the songwriter and musician who, who wrote, um, a lot of the music for Epcot Center and for Teddy Ruxpin and, talking Teddy Bear.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, and George went to Palm Springs and put the cassette, yes it was a cassette, in his car and he came back and he looked at me differently, and he literally just about took me by the collar, and took me to the studio –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and he hired a band, fronted the money for the whole thing, put me in his studio, um, it was, it was Prince Studios in Hollywood.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And we recorded five songs, and then he turned, Brad had built him a 48-track studio in his garage basically, and he turned that studio over to us. He actually babysat for my daughter while, some of the time while I was working in his studio and told us to finish it, and really never asked you know, said if I ever got rich and famous I could pay him back –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.
Lynn Langham: – and so far I haven't and I haven't and I do still know George and someday I'll pay you back George, I promise you know. Um, but he, uh, he, he gave me, he got me back into it.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And it was really interesting 'cause when I started playing again I had lost a lot of bad habits and I had a whole new reason why I was writing but I think my writing went way up just from not doing it for a while –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – you know and, and, and it meant more. It was, it wasn't, it wa, it's not that it didn't mean something before but I had been deprived you know –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – or deprived myself of it and when I went back to it, it had a whole new intensity and I think I wrote a lot better than I had written before.

Norie Guthrie: And this is when you were still in LA –

Lynn Langham: Yeah.


Lynn Langham: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: When did you end up going into Nash, going to Nashville?

Lynn Langham: Um, it was in 1989. Um, like almost 1990. It was in December of 1989 that, uh, we moved to Nashville.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And part of it was because the work that Brad was doing in LA, a lot of the people he was working with had moved to Nashville and you know I had two kids and LA is a pretty weird place to raise your children, and he had worked for a company, uh, for a while called Worlds of Wonder that were the creators of Teddy Ruxpin.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And I was actually the voice of Fuzz the Fob who was a character in the Teddy Ruxpin series and that had, that had gone bankrupt and some things had happened, and that had folded up –
Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and it was just time to make a change and we didn’t wanna move kids to New York or Chicago, but we had to go to a movie, uh, a music center –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and Nashville just seemed like the logical choice, so we moved to Nashville and, um, it was good.

Norie Guthrie: So how did you, how did you kinda settle in? Did you, did you immediately start kinda reaching out to, uh, I guess –

Lynn Langham: When I moved to Nashville, uh, Brad had done an album in LA but it was out of Nashville. MCA had done an album on, on a guitar player named Albert Lee who's a great, wonderful guitar player, and Brad had produced an album with him called Speechless, and it was funded by MCA in Nashville so he had liaisons – you know we were still living in LA but they had like liaisons, people he was dealing with and, um, when we moved there he took some, some of my music to a guy named Buzz Stone and said you know this is, I know this, this is my wife but listen to her anyway, and in the course of that, um, and, and our realtor, oddly enough our realtor when we were looking for a house was engaged to the head of BMI, and she took some tapes and played 'em for Charlie Feldman, and she came back the next day to take us to look at more houses. She says I played your tapes for Charlie and he liked 'em. Charlie doesn't ever like anything I play him. So he set me up with a meeting with, with Jodi Williams and Jodi, I mean this is like when I first got there and –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and Jodi took me out to lunch, and asked me who I wanted to go see, and I had, you know I'm coming off a 6 years of being a mom.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: And not performing at all, and, and I said you know what I think I just need to stay home for a while and practice, and when I'm, feel like I could do what's on those tapes live you know then I'll go see people. So he ended up sending me to, um, several publishers and I ended up signing with Hay Street Music with a lady named Pat Helper.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, it was a company, it was owned by her and a business manager, Chuck Flood, and songwriter, Don Schlitz, who, um, his first claim, his first, he had many claims to fame, his first was “The Gambler.”

Norie Guthrie: Okay.
Lynn Langham: And, um, and I wrote for them for 8 years and Buzz Stone ended up going to Capital Records. He, we was working at MCA when I met him and, uh, he actually got me an artist deal on Capital but they thought they were having a, an alternative department, and I was in the alternative department –

Norie Guthrie: Okay. Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and then as things progressed they decided they weren't gonna have an alternative department, so after devoting 2 years of my life to that and making an album which you know I was pretty proud of and I think they liked it –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – um, they folded that whole department, so the album never came out.

Norie Guthrie: 'Cause if I, I've read recently, so there's the, there was, I can't remember what it was called, and that like kinda late '80s period in Nashville, when Lyle Lovett and Nanci Griffith and all those people were coming up, there's a, the credibility scare or something I think that that was called, and then there was that shift with Garth Brooks –

Lynn Langham: Yeah –

Norie Guthrie: – **** yeah.

Lynn Langham: – and I was on Garth Brooks' label.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lynn Langham: I, I was being, um, produced by Jimmy Bowen who was the head of Capital Records –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – which he had, had become Liberty Records because he didn't want Capital Records in Nashville to be associated with the oth, it was, it was still Capital Records but he had them change the name to Liberty –

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lynn Langham: – um, and it's Capital again now I think. Uh, once he was gone they, they went back to, to Capital, but he produced it, and yeah in the course of the time when we made the album, um –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – they had kinda lost their interest and, um, the credibility aspect and –
Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – Garth Brooks was coming in and selling like hotcakes –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and there was like, uh, I think Todd Snyder and me and there was a band from San Francisco that were all in the alternative division, and they just kinda dumped the whole thing, and, uh, c’est la vie.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah. **** it's really strange how everything kinda just –

Lynn Langham: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: – shifts and changes and –

Lynn Langham: Yeah. Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: – yeah.

Lynn Langham: And, um, the publishing company, Hay Street, they were actually really great about it. You know they just, they've been in the business a long time. They'd seen a lot of stuff go down and they just said you know what all you can control is what you write. That's the only thing you have control of so go to your room and write. They gave me about 6 weeks to whine about you know –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and cry, and then it was like okay. You know we're paying you to write songs so write songs, and they, and they wanted me to write what I loved.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: You know they signed me because they liked what I did naturally. I was never in one of those situations where they said okay you've gotta write a song for Tanya Tucker this week. You know Tanya's cutting so go write a song for, uh, that's like something that Tanya – I, I was, they never did that to me.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: They, they were known for having stuff that was a little different.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.
Lynn Langham: And that's what they, they encouraged. They, all they wanted was the best song I knew how to write, whatever it was –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and then it was their job to figure out what to do with it, and, uh, some of 'em they found something to do with and some of 'em they didn't, but more of 'em they didn't, but that's, that's, that's par for the course you know. It was, you have to, you have to really learn to accept you no –

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: – when you're a songwriter if you're trying to write for a market you know.

Norie Guthrie: So what were some of the ones that ended up getting picked up during that period?

Lynn Langham: Um, well they, they o, t hey owned all of them –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – um, but Wynona Judd, um, recorded one on her first solo album called “All That Love from Here.”

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: I think that album sold I think it's 5 million plus so that was pretty cool. Um, there's some others that were recorded. Holly Dunn recorded one. Um, that was, that's actually the first one that got recorded. Um, it's called I can't hear, uh, “I Don't Wanna Hear It If Your Heart Can't Do the Talking,” and to be honest I never liked it very much but she did so that's good you know. Um, and I had some others that were recorded that, uh, didn't, ended up not being on the albums –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – you know when it came down to the last, in this, the case of these songs literally the last 12 songs and they're only putting 10 on.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, one of was Trisha Yearwood recorded a song called “Magnolia Time” that's still in the, still in the vaults at MCA. Maybe it'll show up some day.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.
Lynn Langham: And Ty Hernan, um, recorded one. Um, I'll tell you the name of it later. I can't even think of it right now. Um, “That's What Love Deserves” is what it was called, and it was also, uh, recorded for, by, um, a lady named Stephanie Bentley who never, her, her deal never really, really materialized at that point –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and, um, you know that's, that's just, that's just the way it rolls there. Um, Rodney Crowell produced an album for his wife, Claudia Church, and he recorded one called “Streets of Nashville.”

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And, uh, the most recent one that happened is, uh, Emmy Lou Harris and Rodney recorded “Old Yellow Moon” for their, um, duet album which was released in 2013, I guess the album was released in 2013.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And it won the Americana Album of the Year, uh, for the Americana Music Association –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – in 2013, and then in 2014 it actually won a Grammy for Americana Album of the Year which is like sometimes you just say thank you you know. Thanks.

Norie Guthrie: What, what was that like to –

Lynn Langham: Uh –

Norie Guthrie: – were, were you there for –

Lynn Langham: No.

Norie Guthrie: – the awards? Okay.

Lynn Langham: No, I didn't go.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: I watched it on TV. You know I was like dumbfounded when I actually you know heard her call it out. It was, it was, uh, it, it was – I'm trying to remember how I saw it because it wasn't on the main, the main show –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.
Lynn Langham: – you know I did hear it re –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and, and, uh, but I, I did see a, uh, a clip of, uh, Rodney going up and, and getting a Grammy. It was, it was very cool you know.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: Um, it's, I can actually and I, I mean I, I keep thinking I'm going to do this 'cause I haven't done it, um, I can get a certificate with the gold Grammy on it. I –

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lynn Langham: – don't actually get the Grammy. Um, they don't give those out to everybody involved, but everybody involved becomes a Grammy winner some, oddly enough I was, I was kinda like well I'm kind of on the edge of a Grammy, but then SESAC, um, I, I'm a writer for CCAC, put in their big nationwide magazine the list of Grammy winners and they put my name on there, so I, by golly I'll take it you know.

Norie Guthrie: I mean I think that's a pretty impressive thing to be able to add to your name.

Lynn Langham: Yeah. It, it's, it's raised my real estate a little bit. People like to know that.

Norie Guthrie: Um, do you wanna play, or I don't know if any of those were written specifically just for the piano, but are any of those ones that were written for the –

Lynn Langham: They are all –

Norie Guthrie: – guitar?

Lynn Langham: – on the piano.

Norie Guthrie: All on the piano.

Lynn Langham: Every one of them. Um, I'll try, I mean you're gonna edit this so –

Norie Guthrie: Yes.

Lynn Langham: – I will try to play “Old Yellow Moon.”

Norie Guthrie: Okay.
Lynn Langham: I could try. I don't play it as well. I don't play it like Emmy plays it. It was, it was kind of a, I mean there's an interesting story to this. Uh, I had known Emmy but I'd never pitched songs to Emmy.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, because my husband worked for her, and I just didn't cross that line.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And she was aware of me. She knew who I was. I'd worked in her studio some and, uh, and I was in Florida and I get this phone call from her, her ex-husband who had been her producer, Brian Ahern, and you know I know Brian pretty well but I talk to him about once every 10 years and Brian, I answered the phone and he says hi Lynn, it's BA, and I'm sitting at my dining room table with Emmy and Rodney, and Emmy remembers a song that you wrote about a moon that you pitched to her a long time ago, but she can't remember the name. You know what she's talking about? And I honestly didn't because I didn't pitch the song.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: But I figured it out pretty quick because I wrote it with Hank DeVito who also used to work with Emmy, and Hank had pitched it so I, you know I had to, just by making the association I figured out that was what it was, and so when they got ready to record it, um, Emmy told me she said well we're not having any guests on this album. We're going to try to do a Hot Band album, but if we have any guests, um, would you play that piano part, 'cause all I had was a piano vocal on it.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And, uh, I was like sure. So I ended up playing piano on it so if you ever hear her track I'm playing piano. That's me, and, uh, that was, that was really special, and then I was in Florida again when I got another phone call saying well, looks like you've got the title cut of the album. So that was really special you know to know that I actually had the title cut.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: That's so anyway it's called “Old Yellow Moon.”

We are
Counting the stars
Out in the night
Round an old yellow moon

With you
Right by my side
I got nothing to hide
From an old yellow moon

And now
As I turn back the years
So little I’ve learned
About heartache and tears

But still
I’m making my way
Into the heart
Of an unknown highway

We are
Following stars
Way cross the sky
Round an old yellow moon

And now
As I turn back the years
So little I’ve learned
About heartache and tears

But still
I’m making my way
Into the heart
Of an unknown highway

We are
Counting the stars
Way cross the sky
Round an old yellow moon

Out in the night
Round an old yellow moon

Norie Guthrie: Great. You did great.

Lynn Langham: Thank you. I don't play that on the guitar very often.

Norie Guthrie: Well I, I, I can't tell that so.

Lynn Langham: Well good.

Norie Guthrie: Um, so can you tell me about, um, kind of your current songwriting process, how that works right now –
Lynn Langham: Well –


Lynn Langham: – uh, it works about like it always did. I, I –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Unless I'm sitting in the room with a co-writer where we've got to come to up with you know, we don't have to but –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – we try to come up with something. Um, sometimes I do, sometimes they do. Sometimes it's just to get, sometimes you know you go have coffee and one of you says something and you go oh, let's write about that you know and so that's what we'll do.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Beyond that it's mostly, most of my songs start, I'm driving and, uh, you know now it's my phone. I hit record on my phone and, uh, sometimes it'll be over a beat of something that's on the radio, but I just sorta sing, pretend like that, you know just take the part I want, sing over it or, um, I have a song I wrote not too long ago, um, called “On the Texas Plains.” I was driving home from Texas and I just started singing you know and I just, and you know it was probably 2 years later that I actually finished the song, um, actually wrote it with someone.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: But, um, the, the easiest way I write is to sit and play and as music comes out –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – words tend to fall into place and I'm not a fast writer generally. I, I, I, I, I kinda slave over 'em you know and, and I, and I try not to push 'em. I look at, at, I've always kind of looked at writing as like when I was in kindergarten they would give us a piece of manila paper and we would color it with real bright colors, and then we would paint black temper paint over the whole thing.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And then we would take our scissors and we would scratch out whatever we wanted.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.
Lynn Langham: I kinda look at songwriting that way 'cause the whole song is there. It's just waiting for me to discover it, and I just pull things away, uh, until it's there –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and, and, and I write slowly most of the time. It's, if I'm writing by myself especially I'm, I'm, I'm pretty slow. Uh, just you know I have a song that's an a cappella song called “White Bird, Black Bird.”

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And, and this is how a lot of them start. They start real fast and then they don't you know, then they stall. Um, my daughter was probably 6 years old, and I was going to buy her art supplies. She's a mad artist and I was, I pulled into a parking place. I was living in Los Angeles. I pulled into a parking place and there were two pigeons in the sky, a black one and a white one, um, you know kind of doing this up in the sky and it just started really fast.

It was a white bird and black bird
They fly up so high
Soaring and sailing all through the sky
And I stood below them and watched as the flew
And I wished it was me up there flying with you

And it came that fast.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: I just sang it. Ten years later one line at a time in order in my car, that song finally finished itself. Um, I'd finished it, taken, taken my children back and forth to school in Tennessee. I had about a 7, 8-minute drive through the country to get 'em to their, their school and I would drop them off and then I would start singing that song, and whatever I got to, if there wasn't a next line I stopped and started at the beginning again, and one by one the lines came and now it's a finished song, and, and a lotta my songs happen that way. I, I don't, if I don't know what comes next I wait, and 'cause if I try to write it, if I try to assert my will over it –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – it won't be as good you know.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: My brain is not as good as the cosmos you know. I think they're out there and, and I just have to uncover them. I mean that's h, that's really pretty much my writing process. Um, it's not to say that I you know, I have a thesaurus, I have a thesaurus – I don't even know how you say it see that's how much I use it. Um, I have a rhyming dictionary. I –
Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – can pull it up on my computer. I do write on my computer more than, I used to only write you know with a pen –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – and paper and I still do that, but especially if I'm in a co-writing situation, it's just faster to do it with the computer and, and I, you know whatever I'm really sure about goes at the top, and then underneath it are all the ideas and the things that we're not using but, but I store everything, and if I'm writing on paper I write, um, I open an out, a notebook that the left side is the ideas and it doesn't go on the right page, right-side page until it's what I want you know.

Norie Guthrie: Interesting.

Lynn Langham: Uh huh. These are my processes for whatever they're worth you know.

Norie Guthrie: No, I mean it's a really interesting way to go about it.

Lynn Langham: Um, but I, I'm, I don't, you know there's some people who, they won't write unless they've got the title. A lotta –

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: – times I don't know what the title is 'till I get to the end of the song. Um, you know, maybe that's why I don't have more hit songs. You know, uh, some people say I did have hit songs just nobody knows 'em. So, I don't know, you can look at that however you want to. Uh, you know, I just, music is just somethin' that I can't get rid of.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: You know? I probably should've been a lawyer or a doctor or something, I don't know, but I'm not.

Norie Guthrie: Let me –

Lynn Langham: I never could keep focused on anything like that long enough to do it. It was like I was always goin' no, I gotta go play music for a while.

Norie Guthrie: – well then that's what you should've done.

Lynn Langham: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: Which you did.
Lynn Langham: Yeah. And, and I'm, and, uh, I'm an artist too. I'm, I was, I was an art major in college. That was the final major that I had.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lynn Langham: And, and I still, still do, do things and so it's, uh.

Norie Guthrie: What do you, what do you work with?

Lynn Langham: Um.

Norie Guthrie: Do you paint or –

Lynn Langham: Yeah, yeah. Mostly painting, h, I don't do it as much as I used to. I, I actually, um, when Napster hit –

Norie Guthrie: – mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – the publishing deals dried up. Um, people were, the publishers were scared they weren't gonna make any money anymore and they were actually right. And, uh, one by one every songwriter I knew lost their publishing deal. Um, and it didn't matter whether you'd had a lot of hits or not. Everybody, when our contracts went up the publishers pretty much backed off of, you know, I would say 80 percent of the songwriters –

Norie Guthrie: Wow.

Lynn Langham: – lost their publishing deals. And it's not really, you know, it really hasn't come back. They, you know, I mean I, I can't speak for New York or LA but now they're saying that about 80 percent of the songwriters in Nashville are gone.

Norie Guthrie: Wow.

Lynn Langham: They're doin' somethin' else, um, because it's just that hard to make a living doing it. And, and I started doing, uh, decorative painting. And I just taught myself how that I could, I could make your walls look like anything you'd like, you know, or your furniture.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, but, uh, and I would say at this point that's mostly what I do –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – with it. But I do it from a real creativity, you know, if I have a piece of furniture I just look at it 'till it tells me what it wants. Just like I write songs, you know. It's, it's the same thing. Uh, um, I have a daughter who's, uh, really, um, really accomplished artist who has a Masters in art and she is, that what she does now. She teaches art and, and she gives me art
supplies and I fool around with 'em and, but not as much as she would like me to probably. And not as much as I would like to. But I keep goin' back to this, you know. Uh, it's like I keep goin' back to these pianos and guitars and –

Norie Guthrie: So if the, um, if the, if the publishing deals kind of went, or went away then how, what do you do now? How is ****?

Lynn Langham: I travel.

Norie Guthrie: You travel?

Lynn Langham: Yes, yes.

Norie Guthrie: Okay.

Lynn Langham: Uh, with, um, you know, like I, I played here this weekend and I'm in Dallas and Belton next weekend. And then I go home to Nashville and I'm there for a couple weeks. And then we're going to, um, California and we have gigs in Joshua Tree in Los Angeles and civil, several places around San Luis Obispo and then maybe Albuquerque on the way home.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And, you know, then I have some gigs in Nashville and then I'll be in Florida. And you know, I, and, uh, the most lucrative is, is house concerts.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: House concerts are great. And it's a fun way to play, you know. I wish more people, you know, more, more people are becoming aware of them. But a lot of people who are into acoustic music they don't want to go to a bar to hear, you know, loud music. And, and a lot of acoustic music doesn't really require a sound system or at least not a big one.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, we now had one we carry with us, um. But it's an intimate way to sit and share your stories and your songs with people. And, and it's ca, casual enough if somebody wants to ask you a question they can ask you a question and, uh, you know. Or they'll have dinner early and they get to meet you and talk to you and you can talk to them. And, and, uh, you know, by the end of the night you're all good friends and, you know, hopefully they re- remember you and take you home with 'em, you know.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: 'Cause to me that's what music is about. I, I'm not, uh, I've never been a real rocker. And, and, you know, I loved top 40 music when I was growin' up just like everybody else
did. But the songs that, to me it's like, you know, they come and I guess, and they stick before they go on, you know.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And that as opposed to just, you know, air candy, whatever. Not ear candy but air candy, you know. I mean it's, uh, things that just, they go by 'cause they just fill up a space out there. Um, it's, uh, what I try to do, I try to write things that make a difference, you know, uh, to, even if it's just to one person, you know, even if it's just to me. It's like there's a reason for that song to stop in your heart before it carries on.

Norie Guthrie: So since you are touring and you had toured in the 70s and 80s, or, uh, mainly in the 70s, how has that changed now? Like the venues, the, the clubs that you used to play in compared to what they are now.

Lynn Langham: Um, well a lot of the, the ones I used to play are not here anymore.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: You know, except for Anderson Fair. Um, uh, we do more, more house concerts, more –

Norie Guthrie: Uh huh, okay.

Lynn Langham: – you know, smaller venues, uh, writers, songwriter shows –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – as opposed to, um, you know, like the things that we, the, um, I travel with someone, with Doug Gill. And, and, uh, when, uh, but when we go to California several of the things that we're playing are actually writer shows where there will be several people who will come just as, to play. They bring their guitars and they want to play but we're the featured act. We're the ones, we're hired to be there.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Um, uh, it's, it's good, I don't know, this sounds kind of egotistical. It's like well this is how it's supposed to be done, you know. That's silly. But that is kinda how it's presented.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: You know, is, is, um, we're the, we're the featured act and, and, uh, we're the ones that get paid and everybody else comes and plays a couple songs but we actually do the show. Um, and some of those are in clubs and some of 'em are, um, in people's homes.

Norie Guthrie: Okay, um.
Lynn Langham: And wineries. Wineries are –

Norie Guthrie: Oh.

Lynn Langham: – great.

Norie Guthrie: Wineries?

Lynn Langham: Yeah.

Norie Guthrie: Interesting.

Lynn Langham: Yeah. Yeah, there's one place that we play that's, it's called Sculpterra.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And the whole place is a sculpture garden, and I mean big sculptures. Not just life size, like things that are like two stories, three stories tall.

Norie Guthrie: Wow.

Lynn Langham: Really big, um, sculptures that they have out there. And it's like we play on a, the, the stage is a, a raised area with a live oak tree that grows up out of the center of it –

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: – with a wall around it with rose bushes. And we stand on that stage and you look out and all you can see, as far as you can see is vineyards. And close to you are these amazing sculptures and in the middle of it are tables with umbrellas. And, you know, people go in to the, the winery's off to the left and they have a tasting room and people go in there and they get their bottles of wine or their glasses of wine and they come out and sit around outside and listen to music all afternoon. You know, Southern California or northern, I guess it's middle California in that place. It's not, you're not really in Northern California yet.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: Uh, out in the sun and it's just beautiful. You know, it's like I would go there and play for free. It's like I get to stand here and look at all this and play songs, it's great. And the sound's gonna be good and you're gonna listen and you're gonna love it and you're gonna buy my CDs and tell me I'm wonderful. What's not to like, you know? It's, it's a lovely place to be.

Norie Guthrie: Uh, that, that's the first time that I've heard about that place.

Lynn Langham: Yeah. There's, there' a pretty good circuit of, of wineries that have, um, you know, it, it kinda works both ways, you know, it's, uh, please each other. It's like they come, they
come to hear music along with having some wine. It helps people come to the winery but it also helps the musicians too. It's, and it's a lovely way to play.

Norie Guthrie: Yeah. I would, yeah, I mean it sounds just like ideal.

Lynn Langham: Yeah. It's pretty sweet.

Norie Guthrie: Um, so I guess kinda, kinda looking over it all in a sense, um, can you talk about maybe how, uh, your music has changed over the years? But you kinda kept the same songwriting process but are there different themes that you focused on? Or, you know, you talked about maybe how you shifted a little bit more from guitar to piano.

Lynn Langham: Yeah. Uh, I mean I would say when I, when I was living in Houston I would, probably 80 percent of what I did was on the guitar and maybe 20 percent on the piano. 'Cause I had just kinda started pullin' the piano back in. Now it's flipped.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: You know, I play a lot more songs on the piano than I do on the guitar. Um, and I, and I think it's more sophisticated and, uh, and it's more adult.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: It's, you know, I still write a lot of love songs. I think people like love songs.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: I like love songs. Um, I don't, I'm not very political. Um, I write some life songs.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: Um, you know, “White Bird, Black Bird” is a life song. It's not, not really a love song.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And people have come up to me and proven that to me by telling me what it meant to them in their lives. Um, which were not at all the things that I thought that I was writing about, you know.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: But to me that's when the song's working, it's best is you sing it and people, it's almost, even though it's not abstract it's like an abstract painting. People take what they want from it.
Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: You know, what, sometimes people take things from it that you didn't know were in the song –

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: – until they come back and tell you that that's what they got from the song and then you go oh, oh yeah, I guess I could see how you would get that. But you don't plan that when you're, you know, when you're writing it. But there's songs that I wrote years ago that I'm pretty embarrassed about now. I would never play them for you or anyone else, you know.

Norie Guthrie: Right.

Lynn Langham: Um, there's some things that, you know, that were really downright silly. But, you know, I guess, I guess it's more sophisticated. And I have more, uh, you might not know it from the things that I've played on the guitar here today because these are songs that are actually on the piano. But, um, I'm a better guitar player and a better piano player. And, um, I don't, I don't think as much about what other people might think.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: If that makes sense, you know. I think that's, maybe some of that's just part of something you grow into as you get older that you, you start to realize that, you know, I have a voice and it's not anybody else's voice but mine.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: And I shouldn't let anybody else rule it, you know. It's my voice. And I, and I think that's, uh, that, that might be the most thing is that I write what I really feel. Um, although there are times when you're in a co-writing situation where you just, you're on the train and that's where you're goin' so you go. But I don't learn those songs, you know. I write 'em and we turn 'em in to whoever gets, and they're kind of, they go behind me. But there are songs that I've, there are songs that, um, I can't really say that there's anything from the time that I was living in Houston that I still play on a regular basis. I have pulled “Livin' in the Music” out again because people have been nagging me to do that so, you know, you win.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: I'm, I'll, I'll play it again. Uh, I do still love the song, I just think I'm a better writer than that now. But maybe I'm wrong, you know, what do I know. Um, but I just try to, I just try to write what I feel and what I believe and, um, hope that somebody else feels it and believes it too when I play it. It's, I think I probably write, I still write slow ballads but I write more mid to up tempo stuff, not more than ballads but more than I used to.
Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: You know, you could come see me play in Houston and, and, uh, you know, I'm, I'm scrapin' to find an up tempo song, uh, you know, to, to keep the set lively.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: I think I have more of that now. I know I could actually probably do a set that moves pretty good if I wanted to do a whole set that way.

Norie Guthrie: Mm hmm.

Lynn Langham: But, uh, you know, my heart's still with the ballads. I'm, I like –

Norie Guthrie: You, you're really good at the ballads.

Lynn Langham: – thank you.

Norie Guthrie: I want to thank you so much for coming in and talking.

Lynn Langham: You're very welcome. Thank you for having me.

Norie Guthrie: This has been really great. Thank you so much.

Lynn Langham: It's the raw me.