

Oral History Transcript: Kie
Originally Recorded March 17, 2022

Eleanor Schulz: So today is March 17, 2022. And I'm interviewing-- Eleanor Schulz is interviewing Greg Kie. We're both in our online zoom rooms and we're going to be talking about Plattsburgh, and the concerts that Greg has gone to. So, do you consent to this interview?

Gregory Kie: I consent to this interview last names Kie, just in case.

Eleanor Schulz: Oh, Kie.

Gregory Kie: It doesn't matter, it's not a big deal happens all the time I usually tell people it's like "pie."

Eleanor Schulz: And you literally said it earlier.

Gregory Kie: That's fine.

Eleanor Schulz: (Shrugs) It's a recording. So I saw that you graduated from Plattsburgh in 1998?

Gregory Kie: Yep.

Eleanor Schulz: So, was it just like those four years, started in 1994?

Gregory Kie: Yes, so I graduated off a semester, because there was a brief time where I didn't attend Plattsburgh so I graduated a semester late.

Eleanor Schulz: SO where did you go in between times?

Gregory Kie: To Clinton Community college. I probably went to too many concerts and to too many parties, my first year in college so.

Eleanor Schulz: Well, 1994 was pretty happening?

Gregory Kie: Yes, yes it was. 1994, yeah most of what I'm going to talk to you about was 1994 I believe.

Eleanor Schulz: So, was that, like the Blues Traveler?

Gregory Kie: Yes, yes, so I'd say like my lifelong love of music, live music really began at SUNY Plattsburgh and now I work at SUNY Canton, which is in Canton, New York. Little off from Plattsburgh, but there are three other colleges in our area, in addition to us, and one of the things I always evaluate colleges on are what concerts they have, and I think that really started with being at SUNY Plattsburgh and having access to a lot of a lot of live music. So I mean, even today, I look at it and say that SUNY Plattsburgh really ingrained that all colleges should have at least one concert a year, in my mind. Now, things have changed a lot since when I went to school and I don't even know if people like concerts anymore, but uh, it's one of those things for like oh, are we having a concert this year? It's just something to look forward to,

and I think it's an important extension of what a college does. SUNY Plattsburgh was really my major introduction to all of the arts and not just concerts. That includes sculpture, painting, theater, and so on.

Eleanor Schulz: I remember Mark Mastrean and he said something kind of similar because he still works at SUNY Plattsburgh. He doesn't think it's the students that, because he thinks it's not the concerts, it's the music industry itself.

Gregory Kie: Right, right yeah, it's changed now where it's more difficult to secure musicians. So really my experiences began the year before I even attended SUNY Plattsburgh. In 1994 like you said. When I was a high school senior at Seton Catholic Central most of my class, the fall of 1994 went to see Cypress Hill and House of Pain. And I felt like I was the only person who missed out on the party. So it was on a weekday so of course I didn't go because I school, the next day, next day everybody's talking about Cypress Hill, House of Pain concert and so the next concert that came up was Blues Traveler as you were talking about. And I had to, Blues Traveler and Xanax 25 opened for them. I don't know what ever became of Xanax 25, I know Blues Traveler still is, I don't know if they're recording anything but they're still around and still played on the radio. And I every time still humaround to a Blues Traveler song, especially John Popper's harmonica whenever it comes on the radio. So that concert was somewhat interesting because John Popper had just had surgery, lead singer and the harmonica guy of Blues Traveler had just had surgery right before that concert, so he was in kind of rough shape but he's still plowed right through. Great show, first concert experience I had. Loved every minute of it, had fun, met up with friends, it was just a good time. So now I've got to change my security questions on all my passwords, because it's like what's your first concert? Blues Traveler. So, same year 1994 when I was a freshman at SUNY Plattsburgh I was working at the Burlington Bagel Bakery. And this guy was walking in kind of as I was walking in and I looked at him and I said well that's, he doesn't look like he's from Plattsburgh. If Plattsburgh had to look. I looked at him I'm like okay, he just didn't seem to fit into his surroundings, for whatever reason. So he walks into the bagel bakery and I walk in the bagel bakery, walk back out to my car for something, I don't know. I go back in and the lady I was working with is absolutely starstruck. And I was like huh and, she's like, "Greg do you know who this is?" And I, I had no idea who it was. It was Ed Kowalczyk from the lead singer to Live. And at the time I wasn't even very much of a Live fan. I wasn't a fan of the band at all. But I was like, oh, oh okay. And he offered us free guest passes to the show at the Field House. And so, for whatever reason, I made it by the very end of the concert. Caught maybe the last three songs. I was like this is pretty good, you know. It's another big concert, lots of friends, lots of people I knew. And I caught the end of the show and it's like oh okay. So I walked out back of the Field House where people would line up to get like autographs from the musicians and kind of just waited there for a while and Ed Kowalczyk came out carrying his suitcase or getting ready to go back to the hotel. And he was saying hi to everybody and signing autographs and that kind of thing, and he just looked at me he's like hi Greg how did you like the show? He already knew I wasn't really very much of a Live fan from our previous discussions, when I was like hey that was really

good you know. So I thought that was pretty cool that I got to meet him outside and then I, outside of the College and then I met him after the show. But then, a few years later I was doing my AmeriCorps Vista which is Volunteer Service to America position in York, Pennsylvania and I'd gone to a bar near my house, I believe it was called Murph's. And I managed to again catch the last few songs of Live. So they got their start in York Pennsylvania, I think Ed Kowalczyk was from York Pennsylvania, if not the whole band was from York Pennsylvania. So it was like wow, I moved to a different state and here's Live again. I had no idea they were from York or anything like that, until that day. I didn't get to talk to him that time because I wanted to be like hey, I don't know if you remember me, but you, you gave me a free ticket back at SUNY Plattsburgh. So unfortunately at that one it was very limited time, they had very limited meet and greet capacity.

Eleanor Schulz: So have you ever seen them since?

Gregory Kie: (Laughs) I have never seen them since. So oh, they closed with I alone, which was their big hit song at the time. At the Plattsburgh stage show. I don't remember the new song, they were, they played a new song in York, and I don't remember what that was. But it always kind of shocked me that, he a, gave me a free ticket and then remembered who I was after the concert. And I always found it fascinating that my chance encounter seemed to happen twice, you know, or maybe I'm just a lightning rod for the band Live.

Eleanor Schulz: Maybe, it is pretty coincidental.

Gregory Kie: It is, really it's like one was very interesting coincidences.

Eleanor Schulz: Are you still a fan of them, or I guess are you a fan now?

Gregory Kie: I, you know, I listened to them on the radio, I think I have their CD somewhere. So I go to a lot of concerts. I've gone to approximately 27 concerts that I remember and have seen about 41 individual bands. So it's kind of one of the things I try and do periodically, is go see live music. Usually you know now it's gotten to the point where it's a very few people on my list that I want to see. You know there's some bands, I see over and over again, but you know. In fact I brought this in just to not only show you, but just to remember, which bands I've been to when I was kind of getting ready for this. (Shows battle jacket) If you can see that okay, that's blurring out. Let me turn off the blur real quick. If I could remember how. You remember to turn off the blur (laughs)?

Eleanor Schulz: You may just have to bring it closer to the camera. I don't know.

Gregory Kie: Yeah I'll try that, it's usually...Oh I know where it is there it is. Choose virtual background, there we go, none. Now you see my messy office though. So this is my concert jacket, with all the bands I've seen

on them minus the ones that I don't like and some other bands that I just really like, so.

Eleanor Schulz: Geez!

Gregory Kie: Yeah, yeah I don't really wear it that often, but I have one. Also, known as a battle jacket.

Eleanor Schulz: Oh okay, that's cool. I think I saw Nirvana on there?

Gregory Kie: Yup, I did not see Nirvana. I have a very good friend, that I go to see concerts with quite often. And she and I are roughly the same age so she was too young to get into the bars when Nirvana was playing right as they were making a big and so she sat outside in her car outside of a bar where Nirvana was playing.

Eleanor Schulz: Well I guess, innovation.

Gregory Kie: Yeah, yeah she's, like I said we're both very big into concerts. For the most part, I tend to be a kind of I've seen them once I'm kind of done and ready to see somebody else, for you know, for like the big bands like Metallica, AC/DC that kind of the bands like that. I like, but she'll go see people over and over and over again. So, not a SUNY Plattsburgh grad.

Eleanor Schulz: Kind of drifted off SUNY Plattsburgh in the Mark Mastrean one too.

Gregory Kie: Yeah yeah.

Eleanor Schulz: It's a small part of your life, even though it was influential.

Gregory Kie: Right for sure. I mean like I said, that was my first experience with live music, live concerts big concerts was at SUNY Plattsburgh.

Eleanor Schulz: Is there any other concerts that come to mind?

Gregory Kie: So this one again was interesting, not on campus, at the Monopole in downtown Plattsburgh I saw a band called the Ominous Sea Pods. And they were, I do believe they actually were signed at one point. They did quite well, they were a small kind of bar band who played a lot in Plattsburgh at the Monopole and at other places and, like everybody kind of knew them. And then, when I was in York Pennsylvania, they actually had booked a gig at the same bar that Live played at so I walked up to them, like hey, I watched you a dozen times at the Monopole and it just kind of hit it off with them and we talked about Plattsburgh and the different bars. So they broke up shortly thereafter that happened, but it was kind of cool to be down in Pennsylvania and talk to people from upstate New York. Also didn't happen very often.

Eleanor Schulz: Okay, I was about to say, is there a connection between Pennsylvania and upstate New York?

Gregory Kie: Not at all.

Eleanor Schulz: So, is there any other stories about Plattsburgh in that time?

Gregory Kie: So what I thought was kind of interesting as I noticed, you said speakers. And so there were always a bunch of things going on at SUNY Plattsburgh whether it was; there was a theater troupe that came in during the summer that my family kind of did together with this. Called Irondale and I'm not sure what happened to them, but that was really interesting was when I was quite a bit younger than college age. And it was a kind of a neat summer thing and then. So I was an art major, a painting concentration, so it's a bachelor of science in arts studio arts concentration painting. They always, and by always I mean at least once a semester, had guest speakers come in and talk to us, whether they were working artists, graphic designer, art historians, other art experts. So it was kind of a every, at least once a semester, somebody would come talk to us about their experiences in the art world. As working professional artists like I said, is it not just concerts but everything art related seem to stem from SUNY Plattsburgh. At least it was foundational in my life.

Eleanor Schulz: Are there any speakers that come to mind?

Gregory Kie: The one speaking event that I remember very clearly, now again we had speakers come in, who had talked to art students specifically. Including John Hock, H-O-C-K. And he also has a sculpture, he came to the campus to build a sculpture, and then he did a presentation as well. That would have been 1998 if I'm not mistaken. Towards the end of my college career. But there's a rather large sculpture of his on campus as well as being to cement mixers and steel things it's really quite big. So yeah, if you imagine the back of a cement truck, there's two of those on the on the sculpture. So yeah that's a fairly big monumental steel sculptor. It's still there, I drive by it every once awhile if I go back to class for to visit my family. So yeah I was a townie, I grew up in Plattsburgh so that, yeah what they call townies. You can cut out all the arms and other pause words, by the way (laughs). The other speaking event that I remember, was from when I was a freshman. Where a series of academics discussed the book *The Bell Curve*. I don't know if you've heard of it, but let me, I- the names of the authors are on the tip of my tongue. Yes, Herrnstein and Murray, wrote this book *The Bell Curve*. And it is basically, it's become now if these authors go anywhere, I think one of them might have passed away, but if one of the authors goes anywhere it's followed by like protests of the theories brought up in *The Bell Curve*. So a group of Plattsburgh academics got together to basically point out everything that was wrong in Herrnstein and Murray's book. It is just very strange. It was basically correlating IQ with race, which is how *The Bell Curve* comes out and it was not favorably reviewed in any sense of the word. So an IQ test in the United States will not work, the same way as it does, if you go to a foreign country because there are certain things, one of the classic examples is in this IQ test there's a picture of a tennis court and the net was missing. And you look at this picture of the tennis court and

they said what's missing, you and I might look at it and say eh well, the net's missing. But if you bring that to Africa or any place that doesn't have a tennis court, how would they ever know that a net is missing? So.

Eleanor Schulz: I can see why that would be controversial, though.

Gregory Kie: Yeah it's almost like the book lived on in in infamy because of the controversy, if that makes any sense.

Eleanor Schulz: Yeah.

Gregory Kie: Yeah like something that might have just gone away as a poor piece of literature did not immediately die, because it was so controversial.

Eleanor Schulz: It kind of reminds me what I've been doing, because I work at Special collections at UW.

Gregory Kie: Oh cool.

Eleanor Schulz: And I've been like, inventorying all these really controversial books. And, like all of them are like, just didn't make any mark. Like I've never heard of them.

Gregory Kie: Oh, really.

Eleanor Schulz: Yeah, some of them are a little crazy but (laughs).

Gregory Kie: My wife works circulation at Potsdam Library. Yeah so, there was a used bookstore in Plattsburgh that I used to work at after I got done working at the bagel bakery. And we met at the used bookstore where I worked in Plattsburgh.

Eleanor Schulz: Well that's nice.

Gregory Kie: So yeah, I actually kind of live in a library, because my wife, really, really likes books. So, but-

Eleanor Schulz: You were an art major?

Gregory Kie: I'd be interested in...Yeah I was an art major she was English lit major. Yep but we were both very big readers, which you probably share that passion as well (laughs). What do you like to read?

Eleanor Schulz: Fiction and history basically.

Gregory Kie: Okay fiction and history or mystery?

Eleanor Schulz: History.

Gregory Kie: History, okay. Like what kind of fiction?

Eleanor Schulz: Like historical fiction.

Gregory Kie: Okay.

Eleanor Schulz: I was a history undergrad so.

Gregory Kie: Okay okay, yeah interesting and are you like interested in conducting other oral histories or?

Eleanor Schulz: Well, I started with oral histories, when I transcribed it when I was volunteering for a museum. And I had an internship last summer; that was a lot of transcribing oral histories. And I really like doing them and, I've never done the conducting part of it.

Gregory Kie: Okay. Yeah well, you can anything you can do to make me sound smarter go ahead and do it (laughs).

Eleanor Schulz: Okay (laughs).

Gregory Kie: You have full editorial freedom, if any of this is useful. I was wondering if there was like a specific direction this was going to go. Did anyone mention to you that, like the top selling live album of all time, part of it was recorded at SUNY Plattsburgh?

Eleanor Schulz: No, not yet.

Gregory Kie: Okay, all right well so that wasn't my notes to tell you about before my time, but portions of Peter Frampton's *Comes Alive*. I, don't quote me on this, but I think it was 1976 album. Portions of it were recorded at SUNY Plattsburgh.

Eleanor Schulz: Wow.

Gregory Kie: Yeah, in fact, and I found out even before, I don't remember where I was working, but one of my co-employees pulled out the LP the record and said "hey look these two or three songs were recorded at SUNY Plattsburgh in memorial Gym" and I was like oh okay.

Eleanor Schulz: It's like the second, well I didn't know that, but I was told that One Direction recorded music video at Plattsburgh apparently.

Gregory Kie: One direction did? No kidding.

Eleanor Schulz: Well that's what someone told me.

Gregory Kie: That's interesting, yeah that's interesting. That would have been after my time and, of course, Frampton was before my time, but yeah I double checked it before we had the call just to make sure I had all my facts straight. Sure enough, top selling live album of all times has three tracks from SUNY Plattsburgh.

Eleanor Schulz: It's crazy, I didn't even know about Plattsburgh before I haven't heard about this project.

Gregory Kie: Yeah, yeah when you emailed me, I honestly thought when they started this project with when I saw the thing and I wrote up the little bit about Live and Blues Traveler. When I saw this I was like oh, they

must be giving this like a Plattsburgh grad student or something like that, then when you contacted me I was like oh okay.

Eleanor Schulz: It just keep seemed interesting you know I like doing like smaller town projects.

Gregory Kie: Yes, yes.

Eleanor Schulz: So much treasures there that nobody really knows about.

Gregory Kie: Yes, yes, and I mean I grew up in Plattsburgh so I like it there, and now I live in Potsdam, which is a small town as well and, like you said, there are, there's just some interesting small town things that only happen in small towns yeah I also lived in the city of York so that was different as well.

Eleanor Schulz: So what do you think that, or do you really know about when Plattsburgh kind of stopped doing all the music scenes?

Gregory Kie: I don't know, I'd be interested to hear about that. I know that Covid, of course, plays a part in it, but like you said I think it's increasingly difficult. When I was there, they were very good at selecting moderately big or up and coming musicians to come perform like Blues Traveler and then it would be like Blues Traveler play to SUNY Plattsburgh and then their music was all over the radio. Or Live, who played I didn't really know Live very well when they played there, but then their music was kind of all over the radio afterwards. It's like to this day, I still hear Live on classic rock stations now. Weezer also played there, I believe the year after. I did not go to that show I don't know what I was doing, but the year or two after the live Blues Traveler concert Weezer played there. Those are the ones that I know of but whoever was working there at the time was very good at identifying bands that they could get to come play at SUNY Plattsburgh who were really, really good.

Eleanor Schulz: That's why I asked in the survey if anyone's, were like student helpers, with that part of the behind the scenes. It would interesting to hear that perspective.

Gregory Kie: I'd be curious of that too. I don't know, I don't know what kind of history you have now but are they still doing concerts like this, or have they do, they kind of peter off?

Eleanor Schulz: It seems like from what Mark said they kind of petered off.

Gegory Kie: Okay yeah.

Eleanor Schulz: Covid is probably still effecting it.

Gregory Kie: Right, right, yeah we've had five or six pretty big concert since I've been here at SUNY Canton but that's over 17 years. And sometimes there are bands on their way up and sometimes there's bands that are on their way down but it's still it's nice to see now more than

ever. I'm 45 years old, so the music that I listen to and the music that college students listen to is probably farther and farther apart.

Eleanor Schulz: Probably.

Gregory Kie: Yeah (laughs). But it's still interesting I love attending the concerts that we have here as well, even, I'm not particularly a rap enthusiast but I still enjoy it whenever they have concerts because it kind of brings back that same feeling that I had. Just like look, this is a big party and there's live music and I'm with all my friends and.

Eleanor Schulz: Yeah I think the live part of it is probably the best part.

Gregory Kie: Yes, yes, especially in this increasingly digital age. Although more and more it's like even for me I love going to concerts but between the expense and the travel and all the other things surrounding different concerts it's easier for me and my rather odd taste in music it's easier for me to just like go online and listen to whatever the heck I want to listen to.

Eleanor Schulz: Yeah that's fair.

Gregory Kie: So yeah.

Eleanor Schulz: I thought it was interesting how some musicians would like do zoom events, but they also asked for tickets still I don't know, I get where they're coming from, but.

Gregory Kie: Yeah, yeah didn't, wasn't there a musician who did like there's probably a few of them did this, but did like a YouTube Live, but they did it for donations for like Covid relief or stuff like that I want to say Machine Gun Kelly, maybe.

Eleanor Schulz: I think the Death Cab for Cutie guy did that also.

Gregory Kie: You're a Death Cab for Cutie fan?

Eleanor Schulz: Yeah, it's a Seattle band.

Gregory Kie: Yeah and what about, what's that band my, there's yeah, there's another band that I like but it's way young for me. I'm trying to think of their name: teenager scare, living...Not ringing a bell?

Eleanor Schulz: I don't think so.

Gregory Kie: Yeah hold on one sec. My Chemical Romance.

Eleanor Schulz: Oh yeah, I've heard of them.

Gregory Kie: Okay yeah I thought you might have heard of them. I'm trying to think of, my children really love My Chemical Romance so yeah.

Eleanor Schulz: So that's like 2000's then?

Gregory Kie: Yeah and it's funny because it's even a little bit when my older daughter got really into My Chemical Romance she said yeah this is music from before I was or you know, when I was really little they were popular but I didn't know them then but I know them now.

Eleanor Schulz: Yeah.

Gregory Kie: I looked for tickets to their concerts but they were very, very expensive and sold out very quickly.

Eleanor Schulz: It will be the trend down.

Gregory Kie: Anything else I can do to help or clarify anything I said Eleanor.

Eleanor Schulz: This has been really helpful.

Gregory Kie: Okay, I hope so. Yeah I don't know, you know, you don't really have a narrative going into this? I mean were there certain things that you were looking for going into this at all?

Eleanor Schulz: Well it's actually because my project was specifically for 1992 because of the anniversary, so we did a survey for that and then no one responded so broadening the scope, you know, trying to get more like 1990s people.

Gregory Kie: Okay that's me.

Eleanor Schulz: Yeah like speakers and concerts. Just got to be flexible, you know really do the oral histories and then try to find the overarching, you know, theme.

Gregory Kie: I like working like that, too, but now so, it's interesting, what I do is not dissimilar from what you do. A lot of times is I'm trying to get people to just talk to me like conversationally so I can pull stuff from it, but what I pull from it is maybe like this much you know versus an entire oral history from beginning to end.

Eleanor Schulz: Yeah, what do you said, like, if you take out the ums and uhs like well when I would do transcriptions and like I would try to look that up, but it seems like people do or didn't, I can do the ellipses.

Gregory Kie: Sorry, say that again.

Eleanor Schulz: I can do, like the ellipses like the dot dot dots. If there's like a pause.

Gregory Kie: Right, I just kill it. Just end the sentence there and start a new sentence, I'm totally fine with that (laughs). That's probably against some rule of transcribing oral histories.

Eleanor Schulz: The only rules I found were from the 70's.

Gregory Kie: Oh no kidding.

Eleanor Schulz: Like manuals so.

Gregory Kie: Yeah I've only read two oral histories and I think one of the problems that I always run into being a former reporter and being a writer for is like they don't necessarily follow a narrative. So this one might be more interesting, I don't know how many more people, you have to talk to.

Eleanor Schulz: I mean, I have another one set up. And I emailed a couple of people, so hopefully some of them will respond back.

Gregory Kie: Oh good, good yeah, but I do that, that would be the problem I always had with oral histories is so say you had four people who are talking about one event. Then you read about that event like four times versus an established narrative of like okay this happened, and this happened, and this, you know.

Eleanor Schulz: Yeah and that's what's history, you know there's like, they used to be like dominant perspectives, but now it's like you're getting more people's perspectives, of different events you know.

Gregory Kie: Just as long as it's interesting and I sound good, I'm happy.

Eleanor Schulz: Okay, sounds good.

Gregory Kie: You can fill in some, put in some more colorful adjectives I don't care I'm totally fine with that.

Eleanor Schulz: Next week is my spring break so.

Gregory Kie: Oh cool.

Eleanor Schulz: I'll be in Indiana to see my friend till Wednesday, so hopefully I'll get it to you by next Friday.

Gregory Kie: That's great well you know, whenever you got a second. It's not going to destroy me. If I forgot to say anything I'll email you back could say oh I forgot to say this, but I think we covered all the main talking points.

Gregory Kie: Okay, well, thank you for doing this and have a great day.

Eleanor Schulz: Thank you, thank you have a good weekend.

Gregory Kie: Yes, talk to you soon.