

morning and evening. "What the hell are you doing in December freezing your ass off in places with names like 'Kitty mat' when you could be in the redwood forests with me?" he shouted into the phone.

On our free days, I occupied myself learning new repertoire, editing, and fingering Milton Barnes's "Fantasy for Guitar," based on the theme "Land of the Silver Birch," which I performed a few months later on a CBC half-hour TV show called "Music to See." In the Yukon Territory, the mercury plummeted to -60°F , causing a small split in the back of my Ramírez guitar due to the sudden fluctuation in temperature and lack of humidity. Our audiences never failed to demonstrate their appreciation, but there were times when the travel was unbearable. We often rose at 6:00 a.m. to hit the road by seven for a school concert at nine in the next town. Afternoons required musical workshops, where we taught students on our individual instruments; evening concerts for the community were invariably followed by late receptions. I ruefully concluded that these tours were easier on male flute or synthesizer players than on female guitarists, as every night I had no choice but to stay up restringing the guitar, ironing a concert gown, and washing my hair while my fellow musicians were free to turn in. Tradition has it that folk and pop artists pay their dues playing to rough crowds in smoky bars; I was paying mine in all the remote, snowbound communities of northwest Canada.

An arduous Saskatchewan Arts Council tour the next season took me through the waving wheat fields to such enthusiastic rural communities as Rosetown, Yorkton, Weyburn, and Estevan, playing in high-school gyms and cafeterias where various volunteers, including the mother of television host Pamela Wallin, shuttled me along prairie roads. Through the guitar-society network, it was arranged for me to perform a concert in Nashville, Tennessee, where Chet Atkins, the legendary country guitarist, found a seat in the audience. Chet was a lanky man in a casual, blue-jean suit who insisted on calling me Li-on-a, to differentiate my name from that of his wife, Leona. Every bit the fine southern gentleman, he projected a friendly manner with his slow Tennessee drawl.