

**A Conversation with Minton Sparks**  
by Frank Goodman (Puremusic.com, 9/2005)

She is by far the rockin'est buck-dancing poet in a house dress that we've ever heard. Not to mention her accessories and her hairdo, which are working overtime. Minton Sparks is one of the most important Southern voices going on today. She speaks in the voices of her deceased and elderly family, and increasingly of the southern characters in her mind.

Because we have reviewed the first two CDs of Minton Sparks, *Middlin' Sisters* and *This Dress*, there is no shortage of clips of the poet's work to enjoy, so we encourage you to do so. (You'll find them on our Listen pages, here and here.) I'm very proud to call Minton my friend (when not performing, her name is Jill Webb), and, like many others, I've been watching her emergence and then her steady rise with astonished delight.

She's getting well-deserved raves in the national press, has been on NPR, and I feel some very good TV spots are in her imminent future. She's ready, man—she's smoking hot live, she lets it all hang out. It's snowing down south, buckle on her shoe as big as a trucker's belt, somebody in the front row might catch a pointed toe in the head if it comes flying off when she starts buck dancing.

Some incredible musicians have backed her up, it's an integral element of any performance. Originally it was Rob Jackson on guitar and banjo, these days it's John Jackson on guitar, he's a big part of the show. But the cast has included her sometimes-producer Steve Conn on piano and accordion, Darrell Scott, Keb Mo, Chris Thile, Peter Hyrka, and Abigail Washburn, all signature players. Of all the great musical tracks I've heard behind her poetry, my favorite is (Nickel Creek's) Chris Thile improvising on "White Lightning"—that cat is something else entirely. But the chick is rockin out totally on the next number, about drinking and making out with the basketball team on the triumphant ride home, "Back of the Bus." Can't wait to see *that* one live... Minton is definitely a performance artist, you see, and she's working the crowd while she spins her webs, and her yarns.

And it hits you in the gut, because her backwoods hicks and their old time religion just ain't as different from any of us as we might have thought. Their lies and limitations, their emptiness and possible redemption, hit home.

The new album, *Sin Sick*, is the best of Minton's three amazing records to date. We have believed from the first that she will indeed become very and deservedly famous. This is also the best *sounding* record, because it was mixed and engineered (and co-produced) by Gary Paczosa.

You need this, and your friends wanna hear about it. Pick it up and turn them on. Here she comes, Minton Sparks.

**PM:** As much as I've greatly enjoyed your first two releases, as you know, I really think you've outdone yourself here on *Sin Sick*. It just keeps getting better.

**MS:** Oh, thank you.

**PM:** When do you find time to write with kids? That's got to be hard. How many kids do you have?

**MS:** Oh, my God, that's the thing. I was telling John today, "I'm going to go crazy if I don't write." And right now I'm still just writing on envelopes in the car at the stop sign.

**PM:** Don't you have one of those little recorders.

**MS:** I don't. I really just keep a pad and a pen.

**PM:** You've got to get one of those little recorders. There are these little digital things—you just press the button and start recording—some of them are no bigger than a key chain.

**MS:** Oh, I've got to get one of those. That could help me, because I seriously just have shit all over my car from what I'm writing while I'm driving.

**PM:** A friend of my brother's who used to drive a bus for Bob Dylan said that Bob used to write on scraps of everything the whole tour. Bill was in the habit of cleaning up the bus and collecting all the pieces of paper and putting them in a shoebox. And Bob, at the end of the tour, would come up and say, "Bill, you got those papers for me?" He goes, "Yeah, here they are, Bob." And Dylan would go home with a shoe box full of notes.

[laughter]

**PM:** So before I get ahead of myself, which I'm inclined to do, I think it's unusually important in your case to talk a little bit about your childhood, and the atmosphere in which you were raised?

**MS:** Oh!

**PM:** Can we go there?

**MS:** The nutso years—no, actually, I had a pretty good childhood.

**PM:** Where was it?

**MS:** I grew up half in Murfreesboro [TN] and half in Daytona, because my father's work was in Daytona Beach, Florida, sort of amidst the skateboards and doobie smokin', although I wasn't involved in that. But it's sort of that and then Murfreesboro.

**PM:** Now, Murfreesboro back then was a different Murfreesboro, one is led to conjecture.

**MS:** Oh, yeah. It was really small. I think there were only—maybe it was 30,000 people, or 20,000.

**PM:** And it was count-ry?

**MS:** Yes.

[laughter]

**MS:** Country. And see, most of my family is from—well, nobody is from Murfreesboro—but Memphis, Arkansas. So deep, deeply southern folks.

**PM:** Right. The people you're calling on for their voices, their stories and their emotionality and mentalities, they're people from Memphis, Arkansas, and the like.

**MS:** Yeah.

**PM:** Who do you feel like you're channeling, by and large?

**MS:** I don't know. I think about that. On *Middlin Sisters*, there were specific people, I mean, and in the performance I sort of had specific individuals, then, to channel. Now it's almost the spirit of—because on this one, it's dark as can be—it's more like all the people in my family or other people who have experienced that particular thing I'm talking about. Like in "Peeping Tom," I've ended up hearing all these stories after shows about women who've fallen in love with somebody in prison or something. [laughs]

**PM:** Yeah, right. And I was very fascinated by that piece because, as a youth, my brothers and I were all into that.

**MS:** Really? [laughs]

**PM:** Yeah, we were incorrigible.

**MS:** Wow!

**PM:** Oh, yeah. We'd break off from what we were doing, "Oh, it's 8:15, I know so-and-so is doing a hundred strokes right now. See you later."

**MS:** [laughs] Oh, my gosh!

**PM:** And I'd be sitting up in the huge bough of some black walnut tree just trying like hell not to fall out, above her bedroom window.

**MS:** Yeah, I mean, that's a man who's got some courage. That's the moxie that most women go for.

**PM:** That's right! A guy who's willing to work for what he wants.

**MS:** Yeah! [laughs] I mean, if he'll sit up in a tree, well, hey, maybe I'll leave my husband.

[laughter]

**PM:** How many children do you have?

**MS:** I have two.

**PM:** Two, yeah. Jeez, I don't know how in the world you find the time to write. Well, you got a good husband, that's one thing.

**MS:** Yeah.

**PM:** But back to the atmosphere that you grew up in, was it more Murfreesboro or more Daytona Beach?

**MS:** Well, it was kind of half and half, but I'd say definitely more Murfreesboro. I'm definitely of that ilk.

**PM:** And it was a markedly southern upbringing?

**MS:** Oh, yeah. It was country. We were sort of untouched by the 60s, even.

**PM:** Really?

**MS:** Yeah! I mean, I'm always blown away by Katie Wallace's stories, and think, "God, we missed it!" Although I was a little young, too, but yeah, we were just—I don't know what we were doing. Nothing! [Kate is a mutual singer songwriter friend who introduced us many years ago when we both showed up to pack the truck when Kate left Nashville to move back out West, this time to Santa Barbara.]

**PM:** When I've seen shows where you and even your brother Greg [Webb] were buck dancing, it was easy to see that, wow, they definitely did not grow up in my town.

**MS:** [laughs]

**PM:** There was nobody in my town doing that.

[laughter]

**MS:** Yeah. We spent at least four hours a week on buck dance training.

**PM:** Wow!

**MS:** It was not like a real happening growing up.

**PM:** How did buck dancing come into the picture?

**MS:** Greg and I were in the Rutherford County Square Dancers. It was sort of what you did. They'd have different dance teachers come in and teach on the weekends. And so we traveled as part of that dance troupe.

**PM:** The Rutherford County Square Dancers. And were you guys good?

**MS:** I was decent and Greg was fabulous. I wanted to be—he danced in Romania. He traveled all over. He was better than me. I was decent. I was a decent dancer.

**PM:** Unbelievable. He was a real shit kicker.

**MS:** Oh, yeah. He could be dancing, jump up on a table, go to splits, come back up, back down. I mean, he was fabulous.

**PM:** And beyond his youthful buck dancing abilities, he has, like yourself, quite an artistic bent.

**MS:** Yeah, yeah. I think there's something about buck dancing, if you do it early enough, it'll set you on an artistic path.

[laughter]

**PM:** Well, we're going to have to investigate that line of thought.

**MS:** [laughs]

**PM:** I think you may be right.

Can you remember when this kind of writing first came up for you?

**MS:** This particular writing—the Minton—this as a performance piece, it has a genesis. The first piece I wrote was when my mother called me, and she said, “Can you believe it, Trella's done left Frank. He's trash.” And she was 91 years old, and I was just like, “We're nuts in this family.” I mean, number one, he was mean, so she should have left him. But just the fact that everybody'd get on the horn and say that this had gone on and somebody was trash, I thought it was worth writing about, that particular thing.

**PM:** Wow. And the character was born.

**MS:** Yeah, the writing of the character started there. Then the character was born with Greg's one-man show, because he asked me to perform it. And that's sort of when the stage show was born.

**PM:** Before that, you'd written to publish.

**MS:** Yes.

**PM:** And you wrote in that voice?

**MS:** Well, I have a whole other set of poems that I don't get into, they're different ones. But in that voice, yeah, I was writing to publish for years before I did it as a stage show.

**PM:** And it was your brother Greg who convinced you to put it on the stage.

**MS:** Yeah.

**PM:** When he said, "Hey, this is a show," did you see it right from the top?

**MS:** Yeah, yeah. Well, not in any way how it is now, five years later, but as a voice—because they're so character driven. Most of my pieces are so character driven that it just lent itself to that, even though when I wrote it I wasn't imagining kind of channeling the person as I perform the poem. But it was a natural. It flowed into that pretty naturally.

**PM:** Having written originally to publish, has anything indeed been published yet, or did it just go down a different avenue in time?

**MS:** Several things got published. Before *Middlin Sisters*, about six of those pieces were published in various literary journals, and a couple of pieces were anthologized. But then I thought, "Nobody reads those." I mean, *I* read them, but—

**PM:** Well, yeah. My sister has become a published poet—she got a book deal and has been anthologized and so forth—so I've heard a little bit more about that scene. And more people read literary journals than I thought.

**MS:** Well, I hope so. I mean, not you're general guy on the street. But there are so many good journals. And people who are interested in writing usually read journals.

**PM:** Right.

**MS:** And the thing that's happened with me with performing is that people come up and say, "I hate poetry, but boy, I like *this*."

**PM:** And on the other hand, so many people are starting to like what you do, is someone in the loop continuing to look for a book deal?

**MS:** Finally, when I get some time, I'm going to put together all the pieces I've done so far as a book. I've actually talked with somebody about publishing a collection. I'm going to do the three CDs just in print, because I've never printed them before, because they were intentionally just oral. But now I'm just starting to have some time to think about that.

**PM:** Has anybody put you on TV yet?

**MS:** Nope.

**PM:** That's a crime!

**MS:** Coke Sams and I are doing a DVD, finally.

**PM:** Oh, really? Good. Because that was the next thing out of my mouth: why aren't we shooting a DVD?

**MS:** It's finally going to happen, in September.

**PM:** Good. Now, what's the deal? Who's doing it to you or with you?

**MS:** Coke Sams of Ruckus Films is going to do it.

**PM:** Ruckus Films, here in Nashville?

**MS:** Yeah. And we're scouting locations right now. It's going to probably have some of the people who have played on the record playing on the DVD. Hopefully.

**PM:** I would think so. You've got some of the best people in the world.

**MS:** Which would be lucky and good. So that's the hope.

**PM:** Well, for sure you'd have John Jackson and Steve Conn. They're both around town.

**MS:** And I've been playing with Pat Flynn all summer out at Puckett's, so I really like that.

**PM:** Well, tell me about that. I didn't know you were playing with Pat Flynn. Where did you say you've been playing?

**MS:** Puckett's is—there's that place out in Leiper's Fork, but now they've opened a new place on the Square in Franklin. [Just south of Nashville.]

**PM:** Oh, Puckett's Grocery.

**MS:** Puckett's Grocery, yeah. And we did an every Wednesday night show all summer, just him and I.

**PM:** And they get good crowds out there, like the Leiper's Fork crowd?

**MS:** They get really good crowds. They're white Republican crowds.

**PM:** They are?

**MS:** Yeah, which is a little scary.

**PM:** Huh. And do they dig what you're doing, the Republicans?

**MS:** You know, they do, because they just shut their ears to the part they don't like. It's amazing. It's like my parents. "If you don't like that, then just scuff over that."

[laughter]

**PM:** So the blueprint that you established from the get-go about using musical accompaniment with the poetry, that was a real brainstorm. How did that happen?

**MS:** That started with my guitar teacher, Rob Jackson. Do you know him?

**PM:** We haven't met, but I remember him accompanying you in the early days. He was very good.

**MS:** Yes, he's wonderful.

**PM:** And he played banjo, too, right?

**MS:** Yeah, yeah. He's really, really—well, it's unbelievable how he supports creatively all of his students. And he and I had talked about doing a little music behind it. And I remember Marcus was in there too, saying, "Why don't you do something"—

**PM:** Marcus Hummond? [a respected hit songwriter as well as a musical playwright]

**MS:** Yeah. So look now, he can just go by first name.

[laughter]

**MS:** Madonna Hummond.

**PM:** [laughs]

**MS:** Anyway, Rob Jackson—we went into his studio, and we just kept fiddling back and forth. I'd read the poems and he'd write some music. He and I did a demo in his



basement, just kind of fooling around with it. That was sort of the first little piece we did together. And then after Marcus heard that, he said he'd produce a full-blown thing, and he got Darrel[Scott] to do it with him.

**PM:** Yeah, you've had had a lot of celebrity ringers through the years.

**MS:** How did that happen? I didn't even know Darrel at the time. Marcus just said, "This guy will blow your mind. Get him."

**PM:** One of the most amazing guys who ever picked up a stringed instrument.

**MS:** I know. And he did it for free. I paid him in some pears at Christmas.

**PM:** Are you kidding me? See, that's him all over.

**MS:** Yeah, he's so nice. He had me play with him once this summer. That was fun.

**PM:** Where? At the Down Home in Johnson City?

**MS:** No. We did the Buisson Art Center. He did that all summer. I guess he's trying to help them build a following.

**PM:** Where is that?

**MS:** It's in Dahlonega, Georgia. And he's been having guest spots. He does it, and then has had guests all summer.

**PM:** And other celebrity ringers—I remember Keb Mo was in there.

**MS:** Yeah. I loved what he did—

**PM:** How did that happen?

**MS:** It was unbelievable. But you know my buddy Nikki, right? You met her before?

**PM:** Oh, sure.

**MS:** She's with Waylon's manager.

**PM:** Yeah. What's her last name?

**MS:** Mitchell.

**PM:** Nikki Mitchell. She's a real **character**.

**MS:** And she's sort of been a linchpin for a lot of the celebrity ringers, because she's in

Waylon's office, and she just comes by people and she knows all those people. And she'd send them some of my stuff, and they'd be like, "Whoa, okay."

**PM:** And pardon me for asking you but how does Keb Mo fit into the Waylon Jennings picture exactly?

**MS:** How does he? Just that Waylon Jennings knew everybody.

**PM:** Right.

**MS:** I mean, Sting would be in Waylon Jennings' office—

**PM:** [laughs] Wow.

**MS:** I wish I could have gotten him. [laughs]

**PM:** Yeah, right. Well, you're not dead yet.

[laughter]

**MS:** Keb Mo was in town doing a show, and Nikki got to his folks, and he ended up coming over right before the show and sat down and said, "Now, what in the hell am I doing here?" He was almost mad.

**PM:** Oh, really?

**MS:** Yeah, because he just wasn't sure what was happening. And he said, "You talk?" He kept going, "You're a talker? I've never heard of a talker."

**PM:** A talker!

**MS:** Then he listened to it a couple of times, and then he goes, "I get it." And he just locked in so deep.

**PM:** But he really didn't know what to do at first.

**MS:** No, he had no idea.

**PM:** He had to walk into the groove. Wow.

**MS:** Yeah. And then, what he did, I thought it was a really cool thing.

**PM:** Definitely. Now, on this record, along with your staple of Nashville geniuses—

**MS:** [laughs]

**PM:**—there were a couple of new ones, right? Abigail Washburn, for instance.

**MS:** Yeah!

**PM:** How did she appear in the mix?

**MS:** Well, Gary Paczosa produced the record.

**PM:** Oh, right.

**MS:** So that was another lucky thing—I’m just really unbelievably lucky.

**PM:** Yeah, Paczosa’s another celebrity in his own right.

**MS:** Celebrity ringers! [laughs] I love that.

**PM:** [laughs]

**MS:** We originally did that piece with John Jackson. And Gary said it had a little too much “Eleanor Rigby” on it.

**PM:** [laughs] That’s funny.

**MS:** [laughs] I’m so un-savvy in those situations—like getting whatever paperwork or release you need to use someone else’s music. When we tried do it, we couldn’t. And Gary was saying he loved Abigail, and then I met her and she’s just so cool personally that we decided to try it.

**PM:** Yeah. I just interviewed her, as you know, and she’s going to be in the same issue as you.

**MS:** Isn’t she lovely?

**PM:** Yeah. And smart as a whip. Not every banjo player you meet is fluent in Chinese these days.

**MS:** That’s true. That probably was extra interesting to you, having been there.

**PM:** It was, indeed, yeah.

**MS:** Did you learn some Chinese?

**PM:** Well, it wasn’t long before I could say, [phonetic] “Waw shi wan nee. Ching nee hu ee bay how ma.”

**MS:** Oh, my gosh!

**PM:** Which was, “I like you. Can I buy you a drink?”

[laughter]

**PM:** So aside from Abigail, were there other new players in the mix this record?

**MS:** Yeah, Chris Thile was on the record.

**PM:** I thought he did the scariest thing in the whole record.

**MS:** He blew my mind!

**PM:** That cat is frickin’ amazing.

**MS:** It was unbelievable. And again, that’s all because of Gary. Chris had been working at his studio, and Chris had come out to a couple shows and said, “I want to be on the next record.”

**PM:** Was he just sitting there improvising along with what you were doing?

**MS:** Yeah.

**PM:** Because that’s what it sounded like. You’d turn a phrase, and he’d turn that corner musically, and God, I just got chills up my spine.

**MS:** Yeah. He said, “Just read it over and over.” And he’d just listen. And then he totally—you know, he said, “Let’s go.”

**PM:** He’s really something. I saw him one day practicing for an Earl Scruggs show, one of those extravaganzas.

**MS:** Yeah.

**PM:** And Bruce Hornsby hit the stage. And Chris Thile just pounced on him with his mandolin, and they just jumped into, like, “Hey, how you doing? You know this tune? How about this one? How about this one?” And they went through twelve or fifteen tunes and they were like two kids. It was very enlightening.

**MS:** I’m trying to remember everyone who played on this record. It was Steve and Chris and Abby and John and—

**PM:** John [Jackson] sounds really amazing, as usual, on this. On one cut, he’ll be playing Stephen Foster’s “Beautiful Dreamer,” and then he’ll pull out Blind Arthur Blake’s “West Coast Blues.” I mean, he pulls from a really wide range of sources, and then he’ll make up a lot of stuff.

**MS:** Yeah. He kind of starts with a base thing, and then kind of goes all over.

**PM:** He's a magical guy. And he's your main accompanist, right?

**MS:** Right now he and I are out on the road, yeah.

**PM:** But, on this CD, there are some very important pieces on the piano. How will you gig? You'll just have to exclude the piano most of the time?

**MS:** John has come up with something else for those.

**PM:** Ah.

**MS:** We have sort of the traveling music, and then we had those other pieces on the piano because I love what Steve played.

**PM:** Yeah. And I mean, you've got such a rapport with Steve Conn.

**MS:** He's a good buddy.

**PM:** And he plays brilliantly with you. You get the full body Steve Conn—I think he's best when there's no bass player and no drummer, and he gets to be the whole sound. Because he can really do it from the appetizer right through dessert.

**MS:** Yeah. He kills me! On this record, he played what he was thinking about, and I would just start sobbing. It was like, "Oh, my God." It's so beautiful.

**PM:** Yeah, he's such an emotionally plugged-in musician.

**MS:** He really is.

**PM:** There are a lot of hot players in town who aren't what you call "emotionally available" pickers.

**MS:** Yeah.

**PM:** I'll get called all kinds of names for saying that.

[laughter]

**PM:** The performance aspect of your art is very compelling. Were you involved in the theater growing up?

**MS:** Just to be in my family was to be in the theater.

**PM:** [laughs]

**MS:** Seriously. My father made us make videos from day one. When the video camera came out, we started making movies.

**PM:** Really?

**MS:** Yeah, he shot us a lot.

**PM:** See, we did nothing of the kind, even though we were a very animated bunch. That had to have a huge effect on you.

**MS:** Well, yeah. I mean, we made, like, game shows all the time. My father would be the host of the game shows.

[laughter]

**PM:** That's fantastic!

**MS:** And then he would film us waking up, but he wanted to show us realistically. I actually have done theater, but it was more just—my brother has directed me, and he's a brilliant director. He has helped me the most. He's such a good director.

**PM:** You mean he has directed the show that you do today?

**MS:** Yes. Every time I perform a new piece, I always go do it with him. And he helps me find—

**PM:** He critiques you.

**MS:** Yes.

**PM:** How interesting. It's been incredible to watch the way that what you're doing has evolved. Performance has become the essence of it. Every time I see you it's gotten much more so.

**MS:** Yeah, I think it's moving. It's weird, because I think of myself as just being a writer, so all the performing stuff is still kind of—I'm not sure about it.

**PM:** Right. When you're planning to make a DVD, who will be handling the marketing?

**MS:** Well, that is the question that remains to be answered.

**PM:** I mean, why isn't Sugar Hill or Rounder Records stepping into the picture?

**MS:** Yeah, see, I don't have anybody pitching it, and I don't know how yet, so I'm still—

**PM:** Oh, that's right. I remember now, I was the one who pitched you to Sugar Hill Records!

**MS:** Yeah.

**PM:** I want to go back there with the DVD and say, "This is what you passed on last time. Ready yet?"

[laughter]

**MS:** Because Gary has done the sound on this CD, I do think the sound has leapt forward this time.

**PM:** Yeah, you're right.

**MS:** Because he really knows how to get a certain sound.

**PM:** He's a very scary fella.

**MS:** Yeah. And so I hope—I mean, I don't know. I'm going to pitch it to a couple people. I say that. I don't know the people to pitch it to.

**PM:** Who's managing you?

**MS:** Well, I have sort of a real part-time helper, Kristin Tschida. Do you know her? She's managing me right now.

**PM:** And is she booking you, too, or is that somebody else?

**MS:** No. Actually, the show tomorrow night, three bookers are coming.

**PM:** When I had the pleasure of seeing you perform, there was some very serious buck dancing going down.

**MS:** [laughs]

**PM:** I can't wait to see the choreography that accompanies these new pieces.

**MS:** Oh, yeah.

**PM:** Like "Back of the Bus."

**MS:** Yeah, "Back of the Bus," the cross-over tune. We love that.

**PM:** That piece is a huge a milestone for you.

**MS:** That's a fun one.

**PM:** Does that have a lot of movement to it on stage?

**MS:** That's just dancing.

[laughter]

**PM:** That's what I want to see. Aside from the DVD, has anybody ever talked about just shooting a video of one tune, like "Back of the Bus"?

**MS:** No. That would be cool, though. We need to revisit that topic when you get back from doing your preacher thing.

**PM:** Yeah, right. I'm going to marry a couple of friends in San Diego, and then I'm going to be a beachcomber in Baja for a week, and then I'll be back. Then I might go to Maine, but I'll be back after that.

**MS:** [laughs] Okay.

**PM:** So do you read much poetry yourself?

**MS:** Yeah, I read lots.

**PM:** Ah. Who are some poets that you especially like?

**MS:** Let's see. I like Sharon Olds a whole lot—though I write nothing like her. I love Adrienne Rich. She's sort of a wild feminist, very political. I like Octavio Paz. I love poetry, and always have. And I've always written. I've practiced the art of writing my whole life.

**PM:** And when you've practiced it, it's been poetry, largely, that you've written?

**MS:** Yeah, pretty much. I write essays, but I write mostly poetry.

**PM:** Have you read any prose lately that turned you on?

**MS:** I just read myself silly. I'm a huge Annie Dillard fan. I'm a huge Dorothy Allison fan.

**PM:** Dorothy who?

**MS:** Dorothy Allison. She wrote what I think is one of the best southern novels ever, *Bastard out of Carolina*. She's fabulous. May Sarton, I read all of May Sarton's stuff. All



of Annie Dillard's stuff. William Gay, I love him. But I like all kinds of writers. That's a lot of southern writers. I read constantly.

**PM:** Do you find time between reading and family life to listen to music much? Is that part of your life?

**MS:** Mostly I like stuff out of Nashville. I get people's records that I hear in town. I'm a huge Darrell Scott fan. And I'm a big Steve Conn fan.

**PM:** Yeah, absolutely. We have some talented friends.

**MS:** I love Abigail's new record. And Nickel Creek's. I don't know, I listen to a lot of stuff out of here, just picking up people's records after shows.

**PM:** How would you describe yourself in the spiritual arena? Are you a spiritual person?

**MS:** Yeah. Deeply. I'd say I am deeply spiritual.

**PM:** Is there an orientation that comes to mind, or is it different than that?

[The tape actually messes up for a second here, and I lost the beginning of what was said next.]

**MS:** —that's a Catholic thing. But they're sort of wild feminist protesters, left-wingers.

**PM:** Really? What convent is that, or do you mind saying?

**MS:** It's Sisters of Loretto. You ever heard of them?

**PM:** Sisters of the Loretto. And where are they based?

**MS:** They're based in Nerinx, Kentucky. But they're all over.  
[[http://www.epcc.edu/ftp/Homes/monicaw/borderlands/19\\_loretto.htm](http://www.epcc.edu/ftp/Homes/monicaw/borderlands/19_loretto.htm)] But the mother house is in Kentucky. Wait, hang on—Eliza is yelling. Hang on one second.

**PM:** Okay.

**MS:** Eliza? What do you need, babe? I'm still on the phone, I can't try one. Okay. We're eating some rock candy over here, Frank.

[laughter]

**PM:** Did she hurt herself on some rock candy or something?

**MS:** Do you hear it popping? That's old school right there.

[laughter]

**PM:** I'm going to let you go soon, too.

**MS:** No, I just had told her not to talk to me, but she had to show me the rock candy. Okay, where were we?

**PM:** We were talking about the Sisters of Loretto.

**MS:** Yeah, the Sisters Loretto. They're just an amazing. They're really devoted to social justice—like women in their eighties who still go protest at the School of the Americas, they're that kind.

**PM:** Right.

**MS:** A great group of women. [a little more about them here]  
<http://www.lorettocommunity.org/MissionHome.html>

**PM:** Which empties into my next question: Are you a political person?

**MS:** I'd say fairly.

**PM:** I thought there was kind of a political/spiritual message inside the new record.

**MS:** Really? You could hear it?

**PM:** Oh, yeah, of course. It's like fifty-fifty, political and spiritual. It's not the kind of spiritual person that I'm very often aware of, but Katie Wallace, our friend, was certainly like-minded in that way.

**MS:** Yeah, Katie is a soul sista.

**PM:** She's politically spiritual.

**MS:** Yeah.

**PM:** It's about injustice, and doing right, and it's about people. And yeah, you can go and meditate if you want to, but it's about getting the world right.

**MS:** Yes. And I wish I did more. I was a social worker for a couple of years, so that's probably what comes through my writing, too.

**PM:** I'm so glad we got to do this today. We've certainly be on the Minton Sparks thing right from the top.

**MS:** Yeah, you guys have. I appreciate you doing that so much.

**PM:** Well, I love what you do, and it's very important, I think. And so we feel privileged to be tied into what you're doing in that way.

