Krist Novoselic:
Of Grunge and Grange

An Oral History
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SAM REED

Krist Novoselic

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While doing reseach at the State Archives in 2005, Novoselic points to Grays River in Wahkiakum County, where he lives. Courtesy Washington State Archives

John Hughes: This is October 14, 2008. I'm John Hughes, Chief Oral Historian for the Washington State Legacy Project, with the Office of the Secretary of State. We're in Deep River, Wash., at the home of Krist Novoselic, a 1984 graduate of Aberdeen High School; a founding member of the band Nirvana with his good friend Kurt Cobain; political activist, chairman of the Wahkiakum County Democratic Party, author, filmmaker, photographer, blogger, part-time radio host, volunteer disc jockey, worthy master of the Grays River Grange, gentleman farmer, private pilot, former commercial painter, ex-fast food worker, proud son of Croatia, and an amateur Volkswagen mechanic. Does that pretty well cover it, Krist?

Novoselic: And chairman of FairVote to change our democracy.

Hughes: You know if you ever decide to run for political office, your life is pretty much an open book. And half of it's on YouTube, like when you tried for the Guinness Book of World Records bass toss on stage with Nirvana and it hits you on the head, and then Kurt (Cobain) kicked you in the butt.

Novoselic: Oh, yes!

Hughes: There's your George Carlinesque rant about lazy people on escalators … And your admonition that "You're only going to live for 70 years, if you're lucky, so you might as

well have fun." And your observation that "more people smoke marijuana in the U.S. than voted for George Bush." And there's 15 pages of Nirvana trivia. …

Novoselic: Oh my gosh.

Hughes: Does that kind of creep you out to have people paying that much attention to your life? Do you ever want to say, "God, kid, turn off the laptop and get a life"?

Novoselic: It's just a window into the future. Because of the free flow of information. There's more and more people in the world, and we're going to have less and less privacy. That's the way it works. You can go on the Internet and there's a record of every place that you visited. People with their Facebook and MySpace, even the phenomenon of reality television.

Hughes: It's incredible.

Novoselic: Yes, it is incredible. Andy Warhol coined the phrase, "In the future everyone will be famous for 15 minutes." And I was a part of this phenomenon with Nirvana. You have to worry about all the press, all the media. It was just kind of a living-in-a-fish bowl life.

Hughes: At least if it's all out there … There's no smoking gun … if you ever did want to run for political office.

Novoselic: It's all there. I mean my excuse is maybe I was on drugs or, I never really did any hard drugs, or I was drinking. I was just a rock 'n' roll bass player trying to have as much fun as possible. That's not really an excuse. I don't know what it is.

Hughes: Well, they'll probably expel me from the League of Oral Historians if I don't stop right now and take the traditional approach. Could you begin by giving me your full name and date and place of birth?

Novoselic: My name is Krist Anthony Novoselic. I was born on May 16, 1965, in Compton, Calif.

Hughes: Are you Krist the second or a junior?

Novoselic: My father was Krist and my great-uncle was Krist. …But it's an old Croatian name K-r-s-t-e (pronounced "Kirsta"). Or it could be Krsto – K-r-s-t-o, which actually means christened or blessed. …

Hughes: When I remember meeting your dad years ago, someone called him "Kristo."

Novoselic: It was Kristo. … What happened was this: In the Croatian and Slavic languages sometimes they don't have a vowel … Like the word for blood, is just k-r-v – pronounced "curve." There's no vowel. … So on my birth certificate it would have said Krste, K-r-s-t-e, which would have sounded like he's cursed.

Hughes: Literally? Are you saying that to American ears if your first name was spelled the traditional way, K-r-s-t-e, and pronounced correctly it would have sounded like "cursed," which is ironic since it means "blessed"?

Novoselic: Yes. So they put an "i" in there and made it Krist, which is a form of Chris, C-h-r-i-s. I actually used to kind of anglicize my name. I went by Chris for a while but then I changed back to Krist after I got my passport and started touring with Nirvana, and people would look at my passport and be like, "That's your name? Why don't you just go back to that? It's kind of cool." So I just decided to do that.

Hughes: Fascinating. Is it correct to call you Krist, or is it now also Chris?

Novoselic: I'm Krist, with a t. … And it's (originally) No-*voss*-o-litch. … I say "Novo-sell-itch," which is the easier American pronunciation. But it's a very unique name in Croatian, and Serbo-Croatian, and Slavic because "Novo" means new and "selo" means village, and so the name is like "new village," or "new villager" or "newcomer." That's the literal translation of Novoselic.

Hughes: Having grown up around all those Croatian kids (in Aberdeen), I knew there had to be an "itch" on there instead of "ick."

Novoselic: Yes, there's an "itch." That's how it's pronounced.

Hughes: I knew a lot of Croatian kids (whose fathers or uncles) all were in the service during World War II or Korea – the Bebiches and the Bogdanoviches, and the Vekiches. They always said they were "tough little sons of vitches." … That's pretty much a trait in the gene pool isn't it, that they are resilient, tough people?

Novoselic: Yeah, with the Slavic folks, those tribes came out of the Carpathian Alps and they just kind of took over this large part of Central Europe, Central and Eastern Europe. And the Croatians settled on the north shore of the Adriatic Sea and took over. They kicked the Alerians down to Albania.

Hughes: You seem to know your history.

Novoselic: Because I learned about it at the gymnasium – not gym class; a school – in Zadar, Croatia, in 1980. So I learned a lot about the history there.

Hughes: Have you done your family tree to see how far back the Novoselics go?

Novoselic: My dad, he went down to the village church and then there was a Blasul Novoselic in 1770, something like that – B-l-a-s-u-l.

Hughes: Tell me about your folks. Where did they meet, and where did they emigrate from?

Novoselic: My father came from the village of Iz, which is in the group of islands off of the ancient city of Zadar on the Adriatic Coast in Dalmatia.

Hughes: And Iz is pronounced how?

Novoselic: "Eeeejeez" (rhymes with "jeeze") **…** And there's Iz Veli, which is a big Iz village, and then there's Iz Mali which is the small Iz. My grandfather on my mother's side, his mother came from Iz Mali. But they were from the village of Prizlaka, which is north of Zadar.

Hughes: Both your dad and Maria, your mother?

Novoselic: No. My father came from Iz Veli, and my mother came from Prizlaka. And that's in the vicinity of Zadar.

Hughes: What was your mother's maiden name?

Novoselic: Marija Mustac.

Hughes: How far across (the water) is it from Iz to Zadar?

Novoselic: Zadar is pretty darn close. There's a big island called Dugi Otok, which means "long island," between (them) so the boat has to go around. It basically was … skiffs with little diesel engines, and it would take about two hours to get to Iz.

Hughes: The pictures look beautiful.

Novoselic: Yes, it's beautiful – limestone and olive trees and pines. It's pretty neat. …

Hughes: So how did they come to meet?

Novoselic: My father, he left Croatia … he left Yugoslavia in the mid-'50s. And he like split from there. He wasn't supposed to leave I guess. So he just kind of took off.

Hughes: Was that an issue, like avoiding the military service?

Novoselic: I'm not sure. I should ask him that. But it was kind of a no-no. He was trained as a machinist, and then he ended up in Italy for a while at some transition place. Maybe it might have even been a camp or something. And then he ended up in Koln, Germany, and he was there for about eight years working as a machinist.

Hughes: Let me see if I can get the dates right. How old is your father now?

Novoselic: My father was born in 1935.

Hughes: So this was him as a young man in post-war Europe.

Novoselic: Yes, he was in Yugoslavia. And then in 1949 Josip Broz Tito split with Stalin, and they had their own vision of what socialism was. … That wasn't my father's vision. And he went to the west.

It's amazing (that Tito) got away with it, but I think that because of the hell that the partisans gave the Germans, Stalin knew he couldn't go in there that easily.

Hughes: That's what I meant by the "tough little sons of vitches."

Novoselic: Sons of *bitches*. And they were armed to the teeth. They were organized. And so my father was in Koln, Germany, before he immigrated to the United States. He wound up in San Pedro, Calif., and had relatives in Aberdeen, Wash. I talked to some folks when I was at a funeral about a year and a half ago in Aberdeen. They recall when my father came to Aberdeen in about 1963, '64.

Hughes: This is before he met Maria, your mother?

Novoselic: Yes. And they remember that this Croatian dude showed up.

Hughes: Not that it would be unusual to have a Croatian dude in Aberdeen. But this was a real live Croatian dude.

Novoselic: *A real live Croatian dude*. And then he went back to San Pedro. My mother immigrated to the United States and she ended up in San Pedro. And they got married in 1964. Then they moved to Gardena, Calif. And my father delivered bottled water...

Hughes: He was ahead of his time.

Novoselic: Yes he was. And my mother was a hairdresser. And then I was born in Compton, Calif., in 1965.

Hughes: Did Krist and Maria know one another in Yugoslavia?

Novoselic: No.

Hughes: What's the story there?

Novoselic: They hooked up in San Pedro because there were a lot of Croatians there at the time, immigrating to the United States. So there was a community of people. It was like Aberdeen in a lot of ways in that there was just a community where maybe if you weren't very good with the English language it was a more natural way (to get acclimated).

Hughes: That's the way it's worked for centuries in America … Germans who came to Wisconsin, or Finns to Astoria. You just sort of gravitated to where your people were.

Novoselic: My father's younger brother Angelo, he came to the United States in 1973 and my father sponsored him. And he's been here ever since.

Hughes: So what was it like growing up? You were in Compton?

Novoselic: No we left. I don't remember living in Compton. I just happened to be born in Compton. What happened is in March of '65 there was a Watts riot. There were a lot of problems in South Central Los Angeles, and my parents split back to San Pedro. … Again it was the community. There were more Croatian people in San Pedro than there were in South Central Los Angeles. And then if I remember correctly, I went to the Leland Street School. … I lived on 1126 West 23rd Street. (Editor's note: He did remember correctly.)

Hughes: You went to public schools?

Novoselic: Los Angeles public school. And I remember my kindergarten teacher spoke about her son a lot, and this was in 1970, because her son was killed in Vietnam, so she talked about that. So I just went through the grades.

Hughes: Did that story make a real impression on you?

Novoselic: Not really. I just remember the lady was sad. Mrs. Boneto was mourning her son.

Hughes: Tell me about your siblings.

Novoselic: One brother and a sister. … Robert was born in 1968, and Diana was born in 1973.

Hughes: So what was it like in the Novoselic household growing up?

Novoselic: Ooohhh, well, (musingly) … I took care of my younger brother and sister on weekends and after school because both my mother and my father worked. My father worked at a tuna factory on Terminal Island … StarKist Tuna. He was a machinist there. He took me to work a couple times; you could see all the canned tuna. And my mother was a hairdresser, and she had her salon. We would just hang out with kids in the neighborhood, and I don't know cause trouble, or stay home. I grew up with a heavy dose of television.

Hughes: What did you watch?

Novoselic: I just watched like terrible '60s sitcom reruns like "I Dream of Jeanie" and "Gilligan's Island." I shouldn't say they're terrible. …

Hughes: Every postwar generation kid grew up with TV. … "American Bandstand" was the riveting thing for me as a teenager (in the 1950s).

Novoselic: Yeah we would watch "American Bandstand," too. That was another thing that was on Saturday mornings. And then there was "Soul Train."

Hughes: Did you see that on TV they're offering those tapes from "Soul Train" and the other old music shows?

Novoselic: I have "Midnight Special." They're great.

So I grew up on a heavy dose of television, and I was always interested in music. I listened to a lot of AM radio. I think one of the reasons why I tinker on Volkswagens is that my father always owned one and would always tinker on them. So I would hang out with him and we would listen to the radio. And then we would go to these swap meets. Like he bought this 4-track – it wasn't an 8-track – it was a *4-track* tape deck. And it had early Rolling Stones and Dick Dale and Chuck Berry.

Hughes: Dick Dale and Del-Tones – surf music?

Novoselic: Surf music. We would listen to "Misirlou" and all that. … I became obsessed with music and always very interested in it. I'd listen to radio as much as I would watch TV. And then my dad bought this tuner that had an FM radio. I think I was like 11 years old, maybe 12. So I started tuning into these FM stations and I discovered different kinds of bands, like Kiss, I kind of busted out of the whole Top 40 thing. And living in California it seemed like it was way ahead of things, being so close to the music industry. … I got into

bands like Aerosmith, and Led Zeppelin, and Black Sabbath that was what was popular in junior high. Then in 1979 our family moved to Aberdeen.

Hughes: Tell me about that. Why Aberdeen?

Novoselic: Well, there were a couple reasons. My parents had some personal issues going on, and they thought that if we moved out of California things would get better. They sold the house in California. It had a really good value at the time, and they got a nicer, bigger house (in Aberdeen) with all this money, so they had money left over. And then the person who sold the house – either Koski or Lamb or something like that – owned a machine shop. He said, "Hey, if you buy the house I'll give you a job."

(Editor's Note: It was Mike Koski of Harbor Machine & Fabricating.)

… So then they moved to Aberdeen and I was now in a different social scene where the kids dressed different. It seemed like they were behind. They were still listening to like Top 40 music. They were listening to KGHO, which is Top 40, and I was more into the KISW. So I lived on Think-of-Me Hill (at the east city limits of Aberdeen), where I had great radio reception, and I picked up all of the cool stations. There weren't a lot of kids in school that I could relate to with music. Music was so important to me and I was just way ahead – way ahead, like, they were laughing at Aerosmith, but in three or four years those same kids in high school were listening to it. Maybe I just had a little more sophisticated understanding of music. But I wasn't very happy and my parents noticed that. And they go, "Oh, let's send Krist to Croatia and see if that will work for him."

Hughes: Wow. You mean this just suddenly comes up over the dinner table? Had that even occurred to you?

Novoselic: I don't even know how. I don't know how frank I want to be, but there were a lot of dysfunctional things that are pretty personal. So one thing led to another and I went to Yugoslavia, and I lived in this urban center of Zadar.

Hughes: So you're 14?

Novoselic: I was 15. It was 1980.

Hughes: What was the trip like, and the welcome back "home"?

Novoselic: We flew over. … I had fun in the summer. That was kind of a blast. And then it

was time to get serious in the fall, to sign up for school. And here was a whole different education system – a more demanding curriculum. We had classes on Algebra, Marxism, History; there was even one called Civil Defense. There were a couple times when the teacher brought this huge machine gun to class, and showed how to disassemble it and put it back together. That was part of their deal. School was very demanding. You had to study a lot. It seemed like the standards were a lot higher in their public education. And the school that I chose to go to was more demanding.

Hughes: Did you live with relatives?

Novoselic: I did, I lived with my aunt. My father's sister.

Hughes: When you were growing up in a Croatian household was English a first language and you just picked it up right along with …

Novoselic: No, Croatian was a first language. And that was another issue for me, too. When I went to Kindergarten it was like English wasn't really my bag. Let me put it that way. So I grew up bilingual. … I'm very fluent in Croatian.

Hughes: So it wasn't exactly like you got thrown in off the deep end when you arrived at school there?

Novoselic: No, I could speak Croatian. Even 10 years ago when half of Sarajevo moved to Seattle, there was this whole scene of these Bosnian expatriates and I made a bunch of friends and seamlessly hung out with them. We were speaking in Serbo-Croatian. And they were all very amazed, saying, "You speak perfect Krist." And I'm like, well …

Hughes: "All my life."

Novoselic: *All my life*. So I've never really studied. And it's helped me (to be bilingual). I can squeeze by in Russian … do a little bit of Russian, and pick it up pretty fast, I can read it too. … I can do pretty OK with Spanish. So I had the mind (for languages). I think it might have helped me with music to, like listening to things and memorizing phrases or having kind of a phonic memory. So if you're playing bass or guitar you can remember things.

Hughes: We were talking last week about a friend of ours, the late Bronco Tesia, who owned the Liberty Saloon in South Aberdeen. He was an amazing character. The saloon was one part museum, one part watering hole and one part ongoing family reunion. You

said that it was too bad that we hadn't taped Bronco because he spoke a really obscure Dalmatian dialect.

Novoselic: Oh yeah.

Hughes: So when you were there attending the gymnasium, the equivalent of middle school in Zadar, were there a lot of different dialects?

Novoselic: There were a lot of different dialects at that time and they probably still have a lot of dialects. I haven't been there in a while. But when I was there, you'd have these kids come from all kinds of places. Like you could tell if they were from the hills. They had kind of a harder Croatian. If you even listen to people from Zagreb, they spoke with a different accent, and they're more kind of Hungarian with their traditional dress and their customs. Dalmatians are more Italian because of the proximity to Italy and being part of Italy for so long. Dalmatians have notoriously disgusting, horrible swear words that people from throughout Yugoslavia know about. It's probably from them being sailors and merchant marines. *Horrible* swear words.

Hughes: Worse than the f-word, the c-word and all that?

Novoselic: It's just *disgusting*.

Then you had different dialects in Croatian – just how you say the word "how." … So that's why we should have tape-recorded Bronco, and if we would have sent it to Zagreb, or some university, they would have probably dropped their jaws.

Hughes: That would have been good oral history right there.

Novoselic: Yeah! (Hearty laugh). Too bad he's passed away.

Hughes: So there you are back in the old country going to school. Are you already pretty tall by then?

Novoselic: Yes, I've always been kind of tall. That's aided in my being maladjusted most of my life.

Hughes: I remember you mom as being tall.

Novoselic: She's around here (in Wahkiakum County). She's 5'10". She'll probably pop in here.

Hughes: How about your dad?

Novoselic: My dad's 6 foot tall. Somehow we kids got very tall. I don't know what happened. My sister is like 6-2, I think, and my brother is 6-8. I'm 6-7. So I don't know if it's what they fed us or if it was something else.

Hughes: OK, you can speak Croatian fluently, because you're Croatian. But in a lot of other ways is this cultural shock? Tell me about what it was like to be there, all of a sudden from Southern California to Aberdeen to *Croatia*.

Novoselic: I just rolled with it because I had cultural shock in the United States from moving from Southern California to Western Washington, or especially like Aberdeen. That was before the Internet. I think cable was new, too, so it was kind of remote. So I went through that, and I went through Croatia. I think there was one thing that almost saved me and it was music. And there was a lot of music coming out of London, including Stiff Records. In 1980 in Croatia, I was listening to Elvis Costello and Madness.

Hughes: So the radio reception was great, you could get all of the avant-garde stuff …

Novoselic: Yeah, yeah, and then we would watch Croatian state television and they'd have like, what's his name, the Stalker – directed by Andrei Tarkovsky. "The Stalker" was on television. "Last Tango in Paris" with Marlon Brando, uncensored, was on television, and no commercials. It was that socialist ideal of art and expression.

Hughes: There is very little dialogue in that film, just a lot of intercourse.

Novoselic: Yes, and I was 15 years old watching it, so it's just blowing my mind. And again, the reception is good. When I lived in Zadar I lived on the twelfth floor of this building. I got all of these Italian radio stations right across the Adriatic because I was up so high.

Hughes: This is fate, I think, that you're in high places – Think-of-Me Hill and Zadar.

Novoselic: I would just dial. I also had a short-wave radio, and I would tune into the BBC on shortwave. They had this program called "Rock" something – not Rock Salad or Groove Salad. It was called Rock something. I would hear these rock bands. I also listened to a lot of classic rock, like Deep Purple. They had all that. Black Sabbath. All the heavy rock was there.

Hughes: What was the music scene like in Croatia? Were there home-grown rock groups?

Novoselic: There were some *great* home-grown rock groups. They were very, very good. I've got to go about collecting their music … start digging it up.

Hughes: Was it punk kind of stuff – hard rock?

Novoselic: They had different stuff. It was all part of youth culture. So some youth were punker kids, and they would listen to punk music. And some youth were like hippie kids, and they'd listen to like the Doors, Jim Morrison was like a God. On Morrison's grave in Paris, that sculpture is from Yugoslavia. At least it was until somebody took it. Some Yugoslavian fan made this bust of Jim Morrison.

Hughes: Did you have a lot of friends? Would they come up to your room and tune in and turn on?

Novoselic: Oh, I had close friends. I'd go to parties and I'd always bring records or tapes or cassettes. I always had a habit of making cassettes off of the radio, so I always had all kinds of tunes that I thought were interesting, or different, or whatever.

Hughes: Let's go back to that fateful day when your folks said, "Gee Krist, why don't you go back to Yugoslavia?" Did you want to go?

Novoselic: Yeah absolutely. I thought "What the heck; sounds like an opportunity." I stayed there for a year.

Hughes: Why did you come back?

Novoselic: I came back because there were some issues with my family. And I don't really want to get into that much more.

Hughes: Do you ever think about the might-have-beens? What if you had stayed over there?

Novoselic: Yeah, I don't know what would have happened. I mean, my family was in Aberdeen so I came back to my family. … I missed them, and it was probably where I belonged. So I went to Aberdeen High School.

Krist's mother, Maria Novoselic, poses with a platinum record he gave her in 1992 when Nirvana's "Nevermind" sold more than a million copies.
The Daily World, Brian DalBalcon

Hughes: Were you musical by then? Did you want to play an instrument?

Novoselic: I could play accordion, but that's (around the time) when I picked up the guitar. My mom bought me a guitar at Kathy's Attic on Heron Street in Aberdeen.

Hughes: What kind of guitar was it?

Novoselic: It was probably just a knock-off. There was a time when you could buy those cheap Italian guitars, electric guitars. I just started picking out songs and I guess I got obsessed with it.

Hughes: When you played the accordion did you ever have any lessons?

Novoselic: I had lessons when I was kid. In San Pedro there was an accordion teacher who went around, and my friend Silvio played accordion. It just seemed like monkey see monkey do.

Hughes: It's a magical instrument. I thought those tracks with the accordion on Nirvana's "Unplugged" session were just great.

Novoselic: I've got to get back into the accordion. That's a fun instrument; it's expressive … because you can kind of pump it. But it never was like culturally hip. It never carried across to rock and roll. So if you were obsessed with rock music like I was then the guitar made more sense.

Hughes: Was there any folk music you picked up on while you were there in Croatia?

Novoselic: Oh yeah, it's interesting. Actually I tend to prefer Bosnian and Serbian folk music. Croatian folk music is really kind of somber with these really fine, fine harmonies. It's very vocal oriented with maybe just some mandolin in the background. I've got a record with Dalmatian music. And then you go up into the Zagreb area, again its more Central European, more Hungarian sounding. And then when you travel musically to Bosnia and Serbia, then you get that Balkan kind of hot blooded, kind of turbo-folk.

Hughes: Turbo-folk? (Laughs)

Novoselic: Yeah, turbo-folk, with just *blazing* accordions, just like the Jimi Hendrix of accordion. It's like nuts. I still tend to prefer that. I love Serbian music and Bosnian music. If you listen to like Gogol Bordello, or my friends in Culture Shock out of Seattle, that's been called like turbo-folk. I think I got the phrase out of the *New York Times*. There was some Serbian singer who was aligned with some nationalist movement and the *New York Times* journalist scoffed at it as vulgar. And then she called it turbo-folk. My friends Gino and Mario, they're the Bosnian expatriates in Seattle, they brought the turbo-folk over here.

They have a band called Culture Shock and they're rock and roll.

Hughes: Most Croatians I know are Catholics. Was the church any big part of your life growing up? Did you go to mass, serve as an altar boy and all that?

Novoselic: I didn't do that, but I got my first communion and I went through that process. My family wasn't really religious. There's another thing about my family on my father's side that's interesting. I met this cousin … They settled up in British Columbia and they were Stalinists.

Hughes: Wow! Stalinists.

Novoselic: Yeah that was a big thing. In the late 1940s there was a big struggle in Yugoslavia when they split, because that was like a Bolshevik revolution.

Hughes: Anti-religion?

Novoselic: Yeah, and when I lived in Yugoslavia I'd go to funerals in the village, I had nothing else better to do. And there were people who were committed socialists that would not go inside the church. They would stand outside the church and wait for the (funeral) mass to end, and then we'd walk to the cemetery. I'd go to wakes, too. In the village where I lived when somebody would die, my uncle … would go with his tape measure to the house, drink some cognac or whatever and then go upstairs and do some measuring. Then the next morning he would bring you this nice coffin. That night, the family would bust out drinks, all kinds of homemade liquor, food. They would just hang out all night and you'd go pay your respect to the deceased.

Hughes: There's nothing like a Croatian wake.

Novoselic: Sometimes they'd pull pranks. This one dude, he showed up at the wake and he was there for hours drinking and eating, and they told him, "Hey man, you've been here for like four hours, you haven't even gone up to pay your respects to the deceased." He said, "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm going to go do that." So he went up there and looks at the dead person and the dead person is wearing his coat. They put his coat on him. (Much laughter!)

Hughes: I love it!

Novoselic: Isn't that crazy? .... Dalmatians with their sense of humor. Boy!

Hughes: Your dad sounds like a pretty philosophical guy. In this article I read he says, "A human being is like a salmon. The place you're born, no matter what the obstacles are you don't give a damn – rain, shine, bombs, you're going to come back." And the sea, he said, "Is a meal a day and you have to go get it." That's Hemingway kind of stuff.

Novoselic: It's fun listening to my dad speak because he has a way with words. He's pretty funny, pretty poetic the way he puts things together.

Hughes: Who were you closer to, your dad or your mom?

Novoselic: I was close to both of them. My dad has that gift of gab. But I guess my grandfather did too. In the 1920s, '30s, the '40s, Iz was an isolated village, and there was a lot of turmoil. My grandfather would go sailing. He was a helmsman on the ship. And then my mother's father would be on a lot of the same ships a lot of the time, so they knew each other.

Hughes: So ironically, that was long before your parents met. Kristo and Maria didn't meet until California?

Novoselic: No, but their fathers knew each other. And so ironically, yes. And my grandfather would come back (from the sea) and he would bring presents for the kids. Exotic things. When you go to the houses in Dalmatia you would see a lot of these Asian clocks and a lot of things from all over the world, and they'd bring ideas, too. But then he'd sit around, and all the kids would be around, and he'd start telling tall tales that were just like —he goes, "Do you know how long my ship is? This ship is *so* big that I was on the stern of the ship, and it was just freezing and I had this coat on, and I walked to the bow, and it was sunny hot. We were swimming." Just these tall tales. But he was at the helm of the ship one time; it's a huge ship right, and then all of a sudden, boom! It just ran aground and he's like, "Oh my god, what happened?" He let go of the wheel, and he ran out to the bow, and he looked over and he had washed up on a giant squid. (Laughing)

Hughes: That's great stuff. Is Croatian a hard language to learn for an English speaker? Pretty complex?

Novoselic: I'm sure it would be. I think that by the end of this century you're going to see a movement of people moving away from these languages. English is going to be the common language.

Hughes: It's kind of a shame isn't it?

Novoselic: It is kind of a shame.

Hughes: I'm of Welsh extraction, and in Wales they've passed all sorts of laws to keep the language alive.

Novoselic: They're trying to do it (in Croatia). They do the same thing in France, you know, the global world. I mean, kids pick up language pretty easy because you're mind is like a sponge, so that's a benefit I've really enjoyed since I spoke Croatian before I spoke English. I was listening to BBC news last night and there was a story about Muslim rappers in the United Kingdom, and how religion is part of your ethnic identity too. So you have these young people in the United Kingdom who are growing up in Islamic communities, in modern England. Then they interviewed some of these youth, and when you listen to like their accents, I'm like, "Wait a minute, what does this sound like?" It sounds like proper United Kingdom English, and kind of urban United States English.

Hughes: That's fascinating.

Novoselic: Yeah, so it was just like, OK, they're getting the culture of urban New York, wherever the rap comes out of, and they're doing rap. But then it's also affecting their English, so here's this new dialect.

Hughes: In colonial Great Britain, the people in India or wherever, throughout the whole kingdom, spoke very proper BBC English. And now there are these new permutations of the way (British) people talk. .

Novoselic: … It's like that's just the way things change. Another one of these things that people get nostalgic about. I don't have any problem sitting here remembering the past, because you need to know it, and it's good to know. But people get nostalgic and they think that things are not going to change, and it's like, man, *they're going change*.

Hughes: Quicker than the speed of light now (with the Internet).

Novoselic: *At the speed of light*. Yes.

Hughes: Do you feel close to your Croatian heritage?

Novoselic: I do feel close to my Croatian heritage, but I'm an American. I was born in the United States; I'm culturally an American. It's the land of immigrants. Politics are more and

more rooted in American ideal. The more I get involved, the more I become sophisticated. At least I hope that I become sophisticated. I hope my politics become sophisticated. … Now that I understand more and more how important it is (the American democratic ideal), I'm kind of a traditional.

Hughes: You've been back there to Croatia several times. What's it like there now … after that outrageous war?

Novoselic: I haven't been there since 2000, maybe 2001. I had the opportunity to work with Washington House Speaker Frank Chopp where we received the delegation of Croatian parliamentarians, members of parliament.

Hughes: Does Frank have Croatian roots?

Novoselic: Yeah, Chopp, man, he's a power "cro," and that was the connection. I think these were all straight-up people, and it was a great experience. But just speaking with my father, and then my experience with Croatia and what was Yugoslavia (has been revealing). And this isn't just exclusive to Croatia. I think this has to do more with mature democracies and why I'm such an advocate of American democracy, because we enjoy this maturity. It seems like in places where democracy is more kind of a novel experience … there's this kind of survivalist kind of ethic where you get corruption and where it's OK because you're only getting ahead, and that's the way business is done.

Hughes: Look what's happened in Russia.

Novoselic: Oh my gosh. … Like I'd love to go to Vladivostok. It's so close, but it's like do I really want to go? But anyway, they have their dark economy there. And here in the United States, corruption is everywhere; I mean I'm not saying things are perfect. We have cronyism, patronage tracks.

Hughes: Bridges to nowhere.

Novoselic: So we're all human beings. I'm not being nationalist. I hope I'm not being nationalist. But I recognize that with our mature democracy in the United States (we have more checks and balances). We elect judges in Washington State, and then judges have to stand before the people and make their case on why they want to be the judge.

Hughes: That's really a good thing, isn't it?

Novoselic: It's a good thing. We elect judges. They're "non-partisan" but their partisanship goes in, so there are issues, but the point is we have (all) these institutions like law enforcement and the judiciary, and the Legislature.

(Novoselic interrupts the interview to attend to a dog outside that sounds as if it's in distress. He returns with the dog.)

Hughes: You say that beautiful dog just wandered into your life?

Novoselic: Yes, he was dumped. … This place is ground zero for dog dumping. It drives me nuts. It's irrational and irresponsible.

Hughes: Did you always have animals growing up?

Novoselic: Yeah, we always had a dog or a cat or something.

Hughes: So, let's get back to coming home to Aberdeen. When you got back here to the Harbor, what was that like? Were you at Miller Junior High or were you at Aberdeen High School?

Novoselic: I was at Aberdeen High School. It was all right.

Hughes: Did you have friends?

Novoselic: Yeah, I had some friends. I kind of hung out on the party scene. But I wasn't very inspired and just kind of wayward. I went to school in Croatia but I never got credit for that year, and so it held me back a year. I should have graduated in '83.

Hughes: Why would they do that, with that stringent curriculum over there?

Novoselic: I guess they just couldn't translate what the credits were, and I needed to have like Washington State History and other subjects to graduate. I didn't have a lot going on anyway, so I went through another year of school, and (also) went to Grays Harbor College and I took vocational classes after school for credit. I got a job with [Lee Bosco] in the CETA program. … I got a job buffing floors at Grays Harbor College, so I would work there after school. Then I got a job at Taco Bell.

Hughes: Which is where I first ran into you.

Novoselic: So I worked after school, and I just kind of lost interest in any kind of social scene because it wasn't compelling. I didn't like the music.

Hughes: Were you playing guitar then?

Novoselic: Yes, I was.

Hughes: Did you take any lessons?

Novoselic: I took lessons from Warren Mason.

Hughes: He taught Kurt Cobain, too, so he's had a lot of brushes with fame. Is Warren still with us?

Novoselic: I don't know; I don't know what happened to Warren. He was over at the music store.

Hughes: Rosevear's in downtown Aberdeen?

Novoselic: Rosevear's Music, yeah.

Hughes: That would be a good story, to find Warren Mason.

Novoselic: Yes, where's Warren Mason?

Hughes: Good idea for an oral history.

Novoselic: Then there was this one dude working at Taco Bell, and he was expelled from Aberdeen High School because he lit off a pipe bomb at the school. So he had to go to Montesano High School. That's when he hooked up with Buzz Osborne and Matt Lukin (of the Melvins rock group). They would come in and see him working after school at Taco Bell. And so I met these dudes, and I was like, hey, they are really into punk rock music. Well, I know a little bit about punk rock. I was into Elvis Costello and knew the Stiff (Records) things, and I was interested in music. Buzz was kind of like this punk rock evangelist …

Hughes: That's the best phrase I've heard to describe Buzz Osborne.

Novoselic: Yeah, and he would preach the gospel of punk rock.

Hughes: Was his hair like he put a finger in a light socket, even then?

Novoselic: No, he had it short – really short.

Hughes: Was Dale Crover in with them then as their drummer?

Novoselic: No, I introduced Buzz to Dale because they couldn't play with Dillard any more.

Hughes: Dale Crover's sweet mom, Marjorie Crover, was the executive secretary at the United Way of Grays Harbor when I was involved with United Way. That's when I heard about the Melvins.

Novoselic: Yeah, how's his mom doing?

Hughes: She's doing great (retired and living in Olympia). She sends you her absolute best.

Novoselic: Oh good!

Hughes: She tells this wonderful story about you kids practicing at her house. And when I called her to say that I was going to come talk to you, she said that you were "A really nice kid. That you had really good manners."

Novoselic: Oh good.

Hughes: Before I forget this, you said … you didn't have a lot of prejudices when it came to music, and so the Serbian-Croatian thing was not a big deal. But during the war, some Croatian guys on Aberdeen's South Side thought it would be funny to say, "Here comes one of those dirty Serbs" when a Serbian guy walked into a café. And a brawl almost ensued over that. The Serb declared. "We fight the old fashioned way." A Croatian guy I know, former state representative Max Vekich, commented that the roots of ethnic strife run deep in the old country, and that some of the atrocities that were committed in that war were just incredible.

Novoselic: I was there in '93 and it was terrible what was going on. … Radovan Karadzic was an educated, sophisticated man and look what he participated in. … Hideous war crimes. It goes back to democracy again. We cannot have a vacuum of power because that's when civil liberties get compromised. … How would you like it if a flatbed truck shows up with 20 (armed) dudes. You're screwed. You'd have to beg for your life. You'd go down fighting.

Hughes: On a happier, more whimsical note, when you were in Nirvana, did you ever think about telling Kurt Cobain and Dave Grohl that you ought to do something in Croatian? Sort of like the Beatles did when they were in Hamburg, and they decided to cut a couple records in German?

Novoselic: No, we never did that. I mean it was like we played in Slovenia once. That was about as close as we got.

Hughes: What was that like?

Novoselic: It was a lot of fun. It was neat to back in what was the former Yugoslavia and

kind of use my language skills, just to be in that sensibility.

Hughes: Did the band have a huge following over there?

Novoselic: Well it was in 1994, so we were huge … a breakout year.

Hughes: Do you get the feeling from what you see on the Internet that there are still a lot of Nirvana posters over there?

Novoselic: There are Nirvana fans all over the *world*. I get things like, "Hey, I was just in Bombay and I saw some Nirvana posters." Or people in China.

Hughes: Does that kind of amaze you?

Novoselic: Yeah, it does.

Hughes: First it's kind of a normal thing, kids in a band, fascinated by music, and then lightning strikes. Is it amazing to you that these people say "You've changed my life"?

Novoselic: My saying is, "Will wonders ever cease?" Because it just always seems like there is something going on that I would never think would happen, but it happens. And so yeah, being part of that phenomenon, it's pretty neat … because it's so positive. The music is really good, and Nirvana was a good band, and … and that's all that really matters. Everything else is just kind of on the sidelines. It's all because of the music. That's what made it compelling because our music was.

Hughes: What was there about the music that just meant so much to you? When you were upstairs with the shortwave on, listening in the dark. What did it mean?

Novoselic: I don't know.

Hughes: Just the electricity of it?

Novoselic: I guess the electricity, and just, I guess if other things were strange, then music wasn't strange. There is … some kind of esoteric exploration. It's just like you're going on this journey. Let's go on a trip! All I have to do is dial in this device and then you can go to London all of a sudden.

Hughes: But do you think there are some things that are common to every generation? That if you grew up in the '30s, and the first time you heard Benny Goodman was a revelation. I remember the day that I heard the opening strains of "Rock Around the Clock" at the beginning of "The Blackboard Jungle" at the D & R Theater in Abedeen when

I was 12 years old (in 1955). It was just mesmerizing, that first chord – Man, it was just breathtaking.

Novoselic: Yeah, I guess every generation has its thing. And again, with the way technology is advancing exponentially, I mean a hundred years ago in 1890, or 1910, things were still pretty rural. It was an agrarian world. (But) we were in the Industrial Revolution, so things were changing pretty fast too. I have pictures of people out here (at Deep River), right out here in the field with like steel thrashers, and hay making devices. But you know, the experience is very unique in the last hundred years. A hundred, a hundred and fifty years ago it was pretty static. Or you have the Middle Ages where for *many* generations, nothing ever really changed.

Hughes: Can you imagine? You're just in serfdom, day after day of drudgery, and dying young, and losing children to pestilence.

Novoselic: I got that film too – "Andrei Rublev" (about the 15th Century Russian icon painter). Have you ever seen that one? It's kind of that medieval kind of thing. That was a scathing era.

Hughes: Or "Monty Python and the Holy Grail." Where they're going around with the cart yelling "Send out your dead." And one guy they plop on the cart says, "Hey, mate, but I ain't dead yet." So they hit him over the head and say, "Don't be a crybaby."

Novoselic: I like the dude that when they're advanced he goes, "We're an anarcho-syndicalist collective." And then he goes into all the minutiae about the meeting: "We'll get a simple majority for this." Yeah, it's really good.

Hughes: You're 6-7. Were you ever athletic?

Novoselic: Yeah, I played basketball, but I just wasn't interested in it. Again, I was more into music.

Hughes: Were you any good at (basketball)?

Novoselic: I was OK. I had my moments where I could be OK at it.

Hughes: Do you like basketball today?

Novoselic: No, I don't like any sport. I'm not interested in any sport. Usually, like the Super Bowl or whatever, the playoffs, I have no idea who the game teams are, who's playing. It's

just something that is just completely off my radar.

Hughes: When you were a teenager you had surgery for your under bite and I read that you said you looked like Jay Leno.

Novoselic: I did.

Hughes: Who did the surgery?

Novoselic: I forget, some doctor in Seattle. They were just cranking them out. (He was) one of those doctors who knew how to do it.

Hughes: Was that more of a cosmetic thing?

Novoselic: It was cosmetic, but it also needed to be done because of the way the bottom teeth didn't line up. That's just another challenge in life, something that just happened; I get all these kind of things thrown at me.

Hughes: You seem pretty resilient. What's that all about?

Novoselic: I don't know. Survivor. Those things happen. It could be my own worst enemy too many times.

Hughes: So what were you like at 15 or 16? What was life like?

Novoselic: Let me remember. It was fun. I guess when you're a teenager the whole world is exciting.

Hughes: Did you have a car?

Novoselic: I had a car. I think I was 17 or 18 when I had a car … when I was back in Aberdeen. I think I was 18 when I got my driver's license because I never took driver's ed. And my dad bought me this 1967 Plymouth Barracuda, and he got it for 600 bucks or something like that, at one of those used car lots in Aberdeen. It was a solid car … good transportation. Then we got a Volkswagen van. My dad helped me get it. That's when I got hooked on Volkswagens. I would maintain it, and I would pretty much drive Volkswagens since then. I got like a bug, and I got another bug, and then another van, and then the '65 van. I would just keep them on the road. I never had a credit card.

Hughes: There's something wondrous about an old VW engine, you know? You can fix them literally with bailing wire. Put on a new fan belt, and you're back on the road.

Novoselic: They're forgiving, yeah, pretty tough. God, they're obsolete cars. I don't know

why I hang on to them. It's just my nostalgia.

Hughes: I saw something on a list of your musical instruments that intrigued me – an electronic organ called a Farfisa?

Novoselic: Yeah, it's right over there.

Hughes: I found out that one of the classic rock songs, "Wooly Bully," was one of the first to be recorded with a Farfisa. And "Crocodile Rock." That sort of honky-tonk sound at the beginning of "Crocodile Rock" is a Farfisa.

Novoselic: Listen to the Doors or early Pink Floyd. It's just dripping with Farfisa. … It's an electronic organ is what it is, and they're made in Italy. I don't even know how to play one. I just kind of dink around on it. There's this band Opal, too, from the early '80s, mid-'80s, they kind of brought the Farfisa back. It was Ray Manzarek and Richard Wright, who just passed away. But anyway those were big Farfisa dudes.

Hughes: Did you ever play that on any tracks with the band?

Novoselic: With Nirvana? I don't think so. I think I found some demo where we screwed around with some things.

Hughes: I was really interested to read in your book that you got hooked on Jack Kerouac. It seems like every generation discovers Jack Kerouac. What did you like about Kerouac – just that freewheeling adventure kind of stuff?

Novoselic: Yeah the road. Adventure and just that kind of prose that is just so easy to read. It's like really approachable.

Hughes: Did you read *On the Road* or did you read *Dharma Bums*?

Novoselic: I read *Dharma Bums* first and then I read *On the Road*. Those are *the* two Kerouac books.

Hughes: What other kind of stuff did you read?

Novoselic: What the heck else did I read? I read like Solzhenitsyn. … Not the *Gulag*, I read *Ivan Denisovich.* And I read like *Brave New World*. I haven't read a lot lately. But I read Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. One of my favorite authors is Nikos Kazantzakis who wrote *Zorba the Greek* and *Last Temptation of Christ* and *The Fratricides* about the Greek civil war.

Hughes: But you were reading back in school too. It wasn't just all music. You must have been a pretty good student if you wanted to be.

Novoselic: If I wanted to be. I was never a big reader though. There are times in my life where I would read, and then I wouldn't read, and then I'd read, and then I wouldn't read. I've always read newspapers and magazines. I try to pick up books. If it's a good author. I've read like William S. Burroughs' *Junkie*.

Hughes: Was Kurt Cobain reading Burroughs before you, or did you introduce him to Burroughs?

Novoselic: No, he was introduced to Burroughs through people in Olympia, Evergreen State College and that whole scene. I think I gave him my copy of the *Dharma Bums* and he thought it was just kind of funny.

Hughes: Who were some of the teachers who made an impression on you? Did you have any particular really good teachers (at Aberdeen High School)?

Novoselic: Yes, I remember Shillinger. He was really good.

Hughes: Lamont Shillinger. He's still teaching. (And Kurt Cobain once lived with his family.)

Novoselic: He's still teaching? Right on. And who the heck were some of the other teachers?

Hughes: Bill Carter.

Novoselic: Yeah, Carter was good. He was an English teacher.

Hughes: He is one of those few guys who has a Ph.D. and is teaching high school. A really well educated guy.

Novoselic: Oh yeah. I wish I could remember their names. I can only remember faces.

Hughes: I'm not very good with names either. But besides the music, did you have these early stirrings … that made you different from the kids who are just sort of hanging out by the Book Carnival (in downtown Aberdeen) and smoking dope?

Novoselic: I guess I've always been maladjusted and a lot of it has to do with just dysfunctional circumstances that I've been in. And a lot of times they were out of my control. And so I just needed to sometimes get away and the only way I could do it would be to smoke pot and alcohol. I never got into hard drugs. To this day I've never seen

heroin. I've seen people on heroin. I can tell when they're on heroin, you know. Yeah, I've never really done hard drugs. It's always been like recreational or it's just kind of a medicinal medication. And then I *had* to quit smoking pot. I just couldn't do it anymore; it was just no good for me. So like I know people who smoke pot, and are pot activists … and God bless them. If you're going to take Paxil – and I don't take any of that kind of thing – you do Paxil or Xanax or whatever. That's your business. If you want to smoke pot maybe you shouldn't be driving, or driving a school bus or public bus or anything, but in your own time you should be able to do it. So it's kind of like a libertarian philosophy. (Thinking back to being a teenager) maybe at the time … it wasn't a good idea. You're a young person and you're smoking pot (you don't realize) that there's a toll. There's a price to pay. You could suffer from developmental issues and that will hold you back in a lot of ways. You're like 18 years old and you're smoking pot. I don't think it's a good idea, and I don't think I should have done it at the time, but I did because again (because of) personal dysfunctional issues I just had …

Hughes: Do you still feel "maladjusted"? You seem like an intelligent, well-adjusted person in a lot of ways.

Novoselic: It seems like I really taught myself almost everything. I taught myself how to write. I learned English in high school but I never really got past that. And I taught myself how to do music. I'm a pilot, so somebody taught me how to fly. But I guess there are a lot of thing I just kind of taught myself. … For years I was maladjusted and then I realized that people have a lot more in common. And I was always interested in alternative politics.

Hughes: Even way back then, when you were a kid?

Novoselic: Yeah … and it wasn't always necessarily like leftist or rightist or whatever. After Nirvana, and I got involved in politics I started to realize that politics is just people. I had always practiced it instead of just writing about it or talking about it, I always try to do things. I started a political action committee. I was part of people getting together to work for positive change in the music community, working on election reform. But you need people to do it. You advocate these issues, like we need a more inclusive music scene, we need a more inclusive democracy, and then you find yourself in these situations where,

well that person's pretty conservative, or that person's pretty liberal; this person's middle of the road, but you have these shared goals and then you start discovering people's humanity. You *will not* have a conversation with me about the football game. It's like talking to this dog right here. I just don't get it. And I'm not against football or basketball or baseball. I'm just inherently not interested. Different strokes for different folks, right? And so I'm kind of engaging people. I guess through politics it's like you discover people's humanities. Like, yes, this person is really conservative but he knows old Volkswagens. So there's a whole arcane knowledge – a 40 horse (VW engine) is different than a 55 horse.

Hughes: Absolutely. There are 6 volts and 12 volts.

Novoselic: There are 6 volts and 12 volts. Then there is a swing axle, and there's IRS axle, there's all kinds. And it's all just archaic. In a lot of ways it doesn't make any sense. Then you find yourself living in this town and there's not a lot of outlet. There's no internet. There's the Book Carnival, which is good because that was the information hub. That was the Google (of the 1980s).

Hughes: It was, and I wonder what happened to the guy who ran it.

Novoselic: He had all those glass balls. … He was an interesting dude. Then I'd go upstairs and I'd shoot pool—

Hughes: Michael Timmons was his name.

Novoselic: —or play video games.

Hughes: Up that side stairwell, up to a loft kind of place.

Novoselic: Yeah. I'd go and by magazines. That's how you'd get information. Upstairs.

Hughes: That's the first place I ever saw the rock magazine that Guccione started – *Spin*?

Novoselic: Oh Guccione Jr. did *Spin* yeah. There was also *OMNI* magazine. That was a good magazine. Do you remember that one?

Hughes: I do.

Novoselic: It was a futurist magazine. … Oh, and then every week I'd go and get the *Rocket* (the Seattle music tabloid).

Hughes: Charlie Cross (who has written a well received Kurt Cobain biography) was editing it.

Novoselic: The Book Carnival had the *Rocket* even before Charlie Cross. So that was like the Google. The Book Carnival was the Google of Aberdeen, or whatever your favorite search engine is.

Hughes: This is really going to sound like an old-fashioned question, but I've got to be an old-fashioned historian here. In fact this is so dorky laughable that I even have to ask it this way, but, can you try to kind of explain for us what punk rock is about?

Novoselic: Punk rock was a reaction to the music that became too busy and too fussy. It was going back to the roots of rock and roll, Chuck Berry. Bill Haley. "Rock Around the Clock." The three-minute statement. That energy. That excitement. I think "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" is a brilliant record, the Beatles record. But what happened was you had the "concept" record. … That was kind of the time in music where you would have a whole album side of music, double albums, and you had this real progressive rock. Some were good and some were not so good. And a lot of the lyrics were about fantasy. And so you'd have a 23-minute song about goblins and hobbits.

Hughes: Yeah, like Donovan and "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida."

Novoselic: Donovan was good too.

Hughes: Yeah, he was.

Novoselic: "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" had a cool riff, and it got out of there. But by the time the mid-'70s rolled around music was pretty overblown and then you had this reaction to it. It was punk rock. It was violent in a lot of ways, and they were deconstructing down to the basics again. The three-minute pop song. "Never Mind the Bullocks" (by the Sex Pistols) is a friggin' pop record, it's a Who record from 1965, 1966.

Hughes: God those guys in the Who are great. I saw the rock opera "Tommy" with Bette Midler as the acid queen at the Moore Theatre in Seattle in the 1970s. It was just absolutely mind blowing.

Novoselic: I love "Tommy." I think it's great, so it's not a wholesale discount (of that genre of rock). So it goes back to like, OK, so punk rock is just reaction. There was punk rock in the late '70s, 1977, 1976, and then there was American hardcore early 1980s, and that's what Buzz Osborne turned me on to. So you had bands coming out of mostly Los Angeles,

San Francisco and Washington D.C. Those were like the three places. And there were always smaller scenes, Seattle had a scene, Portland had a scene.

Hughes: Buzz Osborne is really the oracle isn't he?

Novoselic: He is the oracle. He turned on a lot of people. He changed the world. … So you had American hardcore, which was different. It was like, well, it was the same thing, but it was kind of violent. It was a reaction to what was going on in music, and it was also a reaction to what was going on politically, as in the Reagan Administration. The Sex Pistols sang "Anarchy in the U.K." – "I am an antichrist, I am an anarchist, God save the Queen, it's a fascist regime."

Then you look at American hardcore music of the early '80s and that anarchy "A" symbol was very dominant. And if you look at traditional anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-communalism, communism, anarcho whatever you want to call it …

Hughes: Like the Wobblies.

Novoselic: The Wobblies, yes. … It was decentralization is what it was. And you had the status quo, which was the centralized music corporations were working with radio and television and distributing this product. And the reaction to it was a decentralized system where you had these independent bands with an independent infrastructure of clubs and even a media; fanzines and those kinds of micro-media. And it wasn't a coincidence that that anarchy "A" was for punk rock; it was also these anarchist ideals. What's interesting, especially if you look at what's going on with the Republican Party in the United States in 2008, where its brand name is just tarnished and really bad. But you would think the conservatives would be interested in that ideal, and maybe that term "anarchists" is obsolete and there should be another way to look at it. But you have these decentralized structures where people come together outside of the state or corporate structure and for a mutual benefit. I think the people who are doing that are evangelical Christians with their super-churches.

Hughes: It's amazing isn't it?

Novoselic: Yeah, they have like daycare, they have auto care, and they have all sorts of social services.

Hughes: They've got a Starbucks in one (in California).

Novoselic: They've got a Starbucks, yeah. So it's a total community center. It's outside of the state and corporate structure. …There can be a third way. So you don't want to pay more taxes but we are interconnected. I mean look at the financial systems, they've nationalized, they've globalized the financial system.

Hughes: In one fell swoop.

Novoselic: *In one fell swoop*.

Hughes: In one weekend.

Novoselic: They did it *so* fast! OK, and so this whole thing, people decrying socialism. You can read it in my *Seattle Weekly* blog. There's socialism all over the friggin' place. Abraham Lincoln's father, the story goes, whenever he could see his neighbor's chimney he would move west. You can't do that anymore. The ocean is 30 miles from here. You know what I mean? There's actually more people because the beachfront homes are the primo real estate! (Hearty laughter). OK, you've got to move out here in the hills, in the Willapa Hills where there's less people.

Hughes: Can there be that many gynecologists and attorneys in the whole world to own all those places? … I don't know if you've been to Grays Harbor lately, but there's this place called Seabrook, just below Moclips. It's just incredible. $800,000 vacation homes.

Novoselic: So they're just delivering babies and then suing the practice?

Hughes: The other thing about punk rock to me that really harkens back, like you said, to '50s rock, is that any kids can make it. You get three of them together and it doesn't have to be great, it's just—make some music.

Novoselic: See that was the thing too. … That was the reaction. Some of it was so unattainable, like who can play guitar like Eddie Van Halen? I mean he is just a brilliant genius. He's one of those people. Randy Rhoads, guitar player—

Hughes: Or Cream. Who can play like (Eric) Clapton?

Novoselic: Or, Jimmy Page? I mean those are role models to aspire to. But those are few and far between. Where with punk rock you could play like the bands you were listening to. It's way more realistic, or obtainable.

Hughes: You know what reminds me though is what Dylan said about Hendrix – "It is just incredible." Talk about the fusion of the virtuoso guitarist and the poet who hears the music in his head. And when I e-mailed you the other day about (Dylan's song) "All Along the Watchtower," you said something like, "Hendrix made that song his own." … And Dylan sure didn't mind. I mean it was just that incredible sound.

Novoselic: It's incredible, yeah. And Jimi Hendrix is from Seattle. You now, I know Leon Hendrix. … I've got a bunch of Hendrix records that are just *amazing*. I don't know what the heck compelled a person to play guitar like that. And then the songs too, just…

Hughes: Could any of you guys read music, write music?

Novoselic: No, no, it was an all self taught thing.

Hughes: That's pretty remarkable. So when did you start getting good at this?

Novoselic: I don't know. I was just a bass player. I have a … I hope I have a pretty deep vocabulary of music. Like I know a lot about music. More than likely if I can hear four or five seconds of a song I'll tell you what it is. I might even be able to tell you what album it's on, and what side of the album it's on. … It helps me being a DJ at my community radio station, I'm just like sharing this knowledge of music with people and it's all over the friggin' place.

Hughes: Doesn't it make you feel great that you and Dylan are disc jockeys now?

Novoselic: *You know it does*. … And the thing with Kurt Cobain is like, I could play a lot of cover songs on the guitar. I can bust out a guitar and play all kinds of cover songs, but Kurt never really could because he wasn't really interested in it. … He'd know how to play like five or 10 songs, and like half of them are Credence songs, you know. He was such an original artist. I'll show you this pipe Kurt made me; you'll notice that it's never been used, but it's just so *weird*. You wouldn't even think it was a pipe by looking at it. But he was *so original* and he was just really interested in just doing his own art, and it was all kind of weird and strange. … He's left handed, and so a lot of times he just couldn't go to somebody's house and pick up a guitar. He couldn't play it. He'd have to have a left-handed guitar.

Hughes: Left brain thing?

Novoselic: Left brain, right brain. I don't know what side (it was coming from). It's kind of a different deal, and he was just *super* original. He was just compelled to do it. He had this drive. He hated chores. His place was a *friggin' mess*. It was a pig sty the way he lived.

Hughes: With all sorts of bizarre stuff too.

Novoselic: Bizarre like, oh my god it was—

Hughes: Everything from Aunt Jemima salt and pepper shakers —

Novoselic: Ten of them! … A lot of it was kitsch. And a lot of it was his own invention, and it was super weird. And where am I going with this?

Hughes: Well, the fact is you said something really interesting there. You were suggesting that Kurt couldn't just pick up the guitar. He needed a left-handed guitar for starters, and he couldn't just pick it up and play "House of the Rising Sun" or "Wooly Bully," but he would go off and do something amazingly creative because he was really, really outside the box.

Novoselic: Something compelled him too; he just wasn't (really interested in ordinary things).

Hughes: Did you see that immediately, when you met the guy?

Novoselic: No, I actually saw this pretty sweet dude with a nice temperament, and he was just pretty mellow and easy to be around. I was listening to a lot of punk rock (and thinking about getting back to basics in rock). In the American hardcore music, a lot of it was doctrine too. … It was just like, you would have the punk rock evangelists and … there was an ideology. So basically now the whole pantheon of rock and roll – classic rock – that was a false god, and those who espouse it are false prophets. The new true god is punk rock. That is the new ideology. So you would have people who would basically just give away or throw their records in the garbage.

Hughes: Sort of like busting all those disco records.

Novoselic: A lot of these records I have (on the shelf) are from Dill's second hand store (in Aberdeen). They're still here, I still have them. I go, "Why would I want to throw away this Aerosmith record? I really like this record. I like this Black Sabbath record, it's really good music." OK, so that was the thing with Kurt. He wasn't a doctrinaire punk rock disciple. He

had an open mind about things. But again, he wasn't about convention anyway, and he didn't care. I don't even know if he knew he could play, here's a D, here's an F, here's a G, like on an acoustic guitar, D major chord. … Not that he couldn't do that. He just wasn't interested in it. He just did his own chords; he just made his own thing.

Hughes: He was just really innovative in some of those sounds he was making …?

Novoselic: Yeah, he would just always do two strings kind of different. A lot of times he'd just kind of tune the strings different and have his own tweaky tunings. But that was part of his personality…

Hughes: Well, it was a good thing you were playing bass.

Novoselic: He had a guitar and I was happy to play bass. He wrote all these great riffs. And again it goes to my understanding of music, like "Ahaha! I hear what's going on here. This is what I'm going to do."

Hughes: It's like (improvisational) jazz, isn't it?

Novoselic: It's kind of like jazz, or I would just fall back on my knowledge of music. Or this song is like we're going off into a zone; we're not adhering to anything here. And so that was my approach to it.

Hughes: What was that first record you heard when you were a teenager, in punk rock that just absolutely blew your mind and made you say, "Holy crap"?

Novoselic: Oh it was "Generic Flipper"; it was "Generic Flipper." And that record was like, I put it on the first time, Buzz (Osborne) lent it to me and I'm like, "God, this is really weird. It sounds like live, was this recorded live?" Because the sound was so raw. It wasn't really polished, especially like the heavy metal music of the time. And I put it on again, and I was like "uh, gosh, I don't know." And the third time I heard it, it just like blew me away. What it did was, like, if you listen to records like Black Sabbath's "Vol. 4", or "Master of Reality", or Led Zeppelin's "IV" record, or II record. Those are all monumental statements in the whole lineage of rock. And then you have "Generic Flipper" just right up with them. But at the same time Generic Flipper is nowhere on the radar screen, and that is a failure of mass media, or society doesn't recognize how important this is. Well, I recognized it, and Kurt Cobain sure did. He loved that record. And then Kurt was such an artist, and you've got to

come from somewhere. Our predecessors have handed us all kinds of things – knowledge. They gave us the wheel.

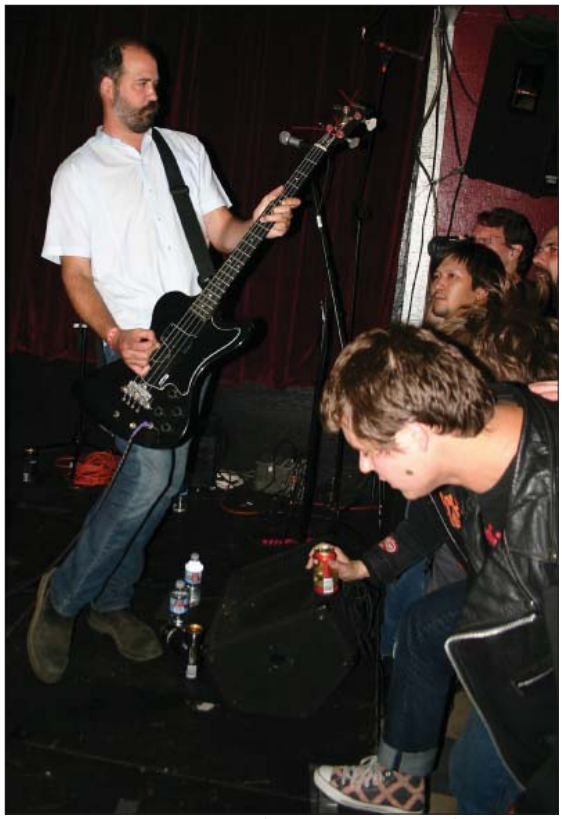
Hughes: Records are round.

Novoselic: Records *are* round, and somebody's pulled guts out … and they invented strings, and instruments, and we all benefit from that. Well, Kurt, he took "Generic Flipper" and he mixed it with his knack for a mean pop hook, and for melodies, and then you have a record like "In Utero." So "Generic Flipper" is such a monument. (Today) I'm like listening to "In Utero" and listening to "Generic Flipper." I made a record with Flipper and hopefully it will be out this January. But while I was doing it, and when it was done, and I was listening to it, it's like, I haven't done work like this since "In Utero," which is the last Nirvana record I did in the studio.

Hughes: That must have been a real kick.

Novoselic: I was inspired. And I busted out all the riffs, for all those riffs, because … it just goes back to me working with Kurt and Dave. So it took me back there, so.

Hughes: I like what you said about the music being obtainable. One of the most touching things you said after Kurt died was when you told the grieving kids, "Just bang something out and mean it. Just catch the groove and let it flow out of your heart." Kurt's genius is what made Nirvana's stuff really break out … But along the way it doesn't mean you can't have a hell of a lot of fun with your own garage band and just dig the music.



Krist Novoselic jamming in Seattle in 2007. Anthony Rigano photo courtesy *Seattle Weekly*

Novoselic: If it was a chore it would never have gotten done. It was all a labor of love, and it was being compelled to do it, so there was some kind of drive there. I don't know what it was … It's that kind of compulsion. Discipline, too. I mean we were hard workers.

We would just lock ourselves away. We would practice every day, and we'd be really serious about rehearsing. We would play over and over and over, and we would develop things.

Hughes: So it was really collaborative?

Novoselic: It was, yeah. It was in the sense where you had Kurt, he was the genesis of it. He was a true artist. He could have done sculptures; he could have been a painter; he could have been a comic book cartoonist, and he chose to make music a priority. He loved music. And so he'd come in, and he'd have these little songs, he was a song writer, he wrote songs. He would listen to other bands and say like, "Where's the song? Where's the song."

Hughes: Where's the hook?

Novoselic: "Where's the song?" So he knew what the song was. And so my part was really easy because I got to work with Kurt, I got to work with Dave, and we put these songs together. One thing that Kurt would do is when he'd arrange a tune he'd tend to drive the riff into the ground. And so I would come in and say, "Well, we need to do that riff half as long. Or here's the structure, verse-chorus-verse, this and that." Which was all basically Beatles, which was Tin Pan Alley—

Hughes: Sure, Carole King. You're back there at the Brill Building.

Novoselic: Yeah, it's the same thing. So it's just basically like listening to so much music for so long, I wasn't inventing anything. I was just kind of putting it into this traditional format, or suggesting that we do it.

Hughes: Do you listen to Dylan too? Do you like Dylan?

Novoselic: I really like Dylan, but I came to Dylan later.

Hughes: Did you get a chance to meet him?

Novoselic: I had a chance but I was kind of chicken to do it. It was in one of those situations where he was meeting a lot of people and I just didn't want to stand in line. … Some of my favorite is that Dylan of the mid-'60s and then contemporary Dylan of just the last few years, "Modern Times." It's a great record, aptly named. So it seems like Dylan, he's aging, but he's not getting old.

Hughes: Forever young.

Novoselic: Yeah, that's a good philosophy for life. I may age but I'm never going to get old.

Hughes: You're 43, and you've had all these amazing experiences. You're still in a lot of ways a punk rocker at heart, aren't you?

Novoselic: I think so. But one of the fights I'm going to do is battle the nostalgia. I'm just tired of nostalgia; it's just holding people back. And it's like the good old days; they weren't really the good old days. Let's be modernists. Let's embrace the future. I mean I'm guilty of nostalgia, I tink around on (Volkswagen) bugs, I've got a reel-to-reel player in my living room.

Hughes: And vinyl records.

Novoselic: I've got vinyl records. Except there is a valid argument with vinyl that if it's a good pressing you're going to have a better audio file.

Hughes: It's a warmer sound.

Novoselic: There is no doubt about it. And until I can conveniently buy high-definition digital files, I'm going to stick with vinyl. But I'll tell you this much: You need to get a 96K DVD type sound. Then if those are convenient I'll start buying them, and I'll enjoy that nice hi-fidelity.

Hughes: Look at the renaissance in vinyl records.

Novoselic: I can't stand MP3s.

Hughes: No, I know. It's pretty tinny.

Novoselic: It's thin.

Hughes: So forgive me for doing nostalgia, but you're back working at the Aberdeen Taco Bell … Were you at the Taco Bell when you meet Buzz Osborne of the Melvins?

Novoselic: Yeah, that's how it happened.

Hughes: This guy is really amazing for the influence he had. Buzz is in Montesano. Is he older than you guys?

Novoselic: He's like a year older. Buzz is like a modernist; he's a future man; he's an iconoclast, true iconoclast.

Hughes: And still so today, right?

Novoselic: And still. And he's enthusiastic about this music and he wants to talk to people about it. I was interested and I had an open mind. Again, from living in so many different places, being in different situations; maybe just growing up speaking Croatian, and all of a sudden in Kindergarten I have to speak English. I guess my brain was just like, "OK, what's this new thing here? I might as well pick it up and learn how to do it." And my parents were different culturally too. Backing up a little bit, when we lived in San Pedro, all of our relatives were Croatian people. We didn't really associate with mainstream American people, so I was always kind of an outsider, or at least kind of different. So Buzz comes along, and I'm like "What's this music?" Some of it was really good. Some of it wasn't necessarily that good.

Hughes: Were the Melvins in existence then when you first met?

Novoselic: Yes, the Melvins were with Mike Dillard. And so I'd go to Montesano and I'd listen to their practices.

Hughes: But your friend Dale Crover was not yet drumming with the band.

Novoselic: I think what happened was Mike Dillard, the drummer, needed to get a job. People were graduating from high school. And I think Mike's father was a log truck driver. Mike just had some obligations so he couldn't do the Melvins any more. They needed a drummer, and it was Dale.

Hughes: Dale Crover seemed like an extraordinarily good drummer to me.

Novoselic: Dale Crover is one of those (outstanding) drummers. Ask Dave Grohl about Dale Crover. He'll say it better than I am because Dave Grohl is one of the great rock and roll drummers. He's up there with John Bonham or Keith Moon. He's original. He's as solid as a rock. I know drummers because the bass notes are always off the kick-drum. You're always going off the kick-drum. I've got a drum set right over there. (Points to a corner of the music room.) As for Dale, his effect on Nirvana was undeniable. I mean listen to those songs on "Bleach." He's a powerhouse. He's solid and straight ahead when he needs to be, and at the same time he could be incredibly complex and like inventive, or innovative. So he's a real musician, and he's had classical training …

Hughes: Really? So there's a rock 'n' roll guy who can read music.

Novoselic: He took band class at Aberdeen High. … He started out early with that real (intense) practice drum training where you play the snare drums—

Hughes: He was doing the "Star Spangled Banner," and then he picks up and can riff rock 'n' roll off that?

Novoselic: Yeah he does that.

Hughes: So do you get free food when you're at Taco Bell?

Novoselic: Absolutely!

Hughes: There's a brand new Taco Bell in Aberdeen. Out front, there's a really funky metal sculpture that isn't half bad. It looks like a cross between Don Quixote and a gaucho.

Novoselic: Oh cool.

Hughes: It would really make a great album cover. … So you're at the old Aberdeen Taco Bell and you meet Buzz Osborne of the Melvins. And that's really a decisive moment that says to you, "Wow, I can really do this. I'm ready to go hang out with these guys."

Novoselic: I'm going to hang out with these guys. I wasn't hanging out with anybody. I was working. I was going to community college at night, and I was going to high school during the day. The other social scene, that whole party scene just wasn't interesting to me at all. I didn't like that slick heavy metal music of the moment. It wasn't compelling.

Hughes: Did you get to sit in with the Melvins?

Novoselic: Yeah, we would play tunes. Kind of jam, or play funny cover songs or something like that. And so the scene was on Dale Crover's parents' back porch.

Hughes: Second Street, Aberdeen, Washington, 1985.

Novoselic: Second Street, yeah, yeah. You know who has a lot of photos of that time is Matt Lukin (the bassist for the Melvins, later of Seattle's Mudhoney).

Hughes: Where is Matt Lukin?

Novoselic: He's up in West Seattle.

Hughes: You mean candid stuff of the guys playing music and hanging out?

Novoselic: Yeah, yeah. … And so there would be the band and there would be other teenagers, and there was this one kid who started hanging out there. Kurt Cobain. He could play guitar, and he was interested in music. Like me, he was not interested in like

sports. He was maladjusted or wasn't interested in the mainstream culture … searching for something.

And so I started hanging out with Kurt. He was pretty compelling … always drawing, always doing this expressive work. And he had a guitar and an amp. Kurt was cleaning motels over in Ocean Shores, and it was, "Hey, let's just start a band ourselves."

Hughes: That was in 1986. You two really hit it off, right from the get-go?

Novoselic: Yeah, we hit it off. We'd make little films or we'd make music. And then we got serious and we needed to find a drummer, and we found Dale Burckhard – no, not Dale, *Aaron* Burckhard.

END OF INTERVIEW I

Krist Novoselic

October 14, 2008

Interview II

Krist Novoselic

October 15, 2008

Hughes: I was really impressed by the whole Grange ritual last night, and the fact that you were really seriously involved – that this wasn't anything that you got into on a whim. How long have you been doing that?

Krist Novoselic, master of the Grays River Grange, admires a raffle quilt with a fellow Granger.
John Hughes, The Legacy Project

Novoselic: I've been doing it since 2003, so five years. I came to a meeting just an observer and I saw them doing the ritual. It was very interesting, and I was taken aback a little bit because it's very unconventional by modern standards. So I looked into it and found out the history of ritual and how the Grange got started. I learned that that type of activity was more common in the 19th century.

Hughes: The ritual that you still use here at the Grays River Grange?

Novoselic: Yeah, early 20th century. And as somebody who's interested in politics and participation, I recognized the Grange as an institution and a leader on the west end in Wahkiakum County, and it was a good venue to get involved. In the modern world, people think of secret societies and they … they think of conspiracy theories or some kind of plot to control the world, but it wasn't like that at all. There was a very practical reason why the Grange had closed meetings … and that the ritual was secret because it was people coming together, and they needed to have that level of protection. … They could potentially get infiltrated by railroad monopolies, or brokers, carpetbaggers – people like that. So the farmers, through free association, the right of association, private association, came together. To come to a meeting you needed to demonstrate that you were initiated, so you could speak in confidence without somebody infiltrating a meeting and working against the group's interest. So it's a real practical thing. As society changed and the world changed, then that whole secret aspect of the ritual really wasn't practical any more. So at the Grays River Grange, I joke that

we're Orthodox Grangers because we keep the old traditions going. And if you listen (carefully) the ritual is like lessons and it's basically just about agriculture and about nature. Like when the master is sworn in for a new term, part of the oath is that "Nature always looks forward and never looks back." Which is a really good way to look at things, especially someone like myself. This is a contradiction because I'm tired of nostalgia, but we're doing this 19th century ritual because it's important to kind of keep that line going. It's like our predecessors built this hall for us, and our predecessors built this organization for us, so in a lot of ways we keep that going. It's *endearing*, and it's quaint. Some people think it's too religious, or it's not religious enough, or it's the wrong religion. And it doesn't even necessarily have to be about religion. At all.

Hughes: I thought it was touching to say goodbye to someone you lost in a ritual.

Novoselic: Yeah, exactly. That was a special part. That was because our Grange sister passed away. We had a special ceremony to remember her … So we drape the charter …

Hughes: I think you've really hit it on a metaphor of seasons, in agriculture, always moving forward. So tell me what appeals to you about the Grange and what you've found out about the Grange and politics.

Grange Master Krist Novoselic with fellow members of the Grays River Grange, October 14, 2008.
John Hughes, The Legacy Project

Novoselic: I think that what I like about the Grange is, again coming out of the punk rock scene in the 1980s and how decentralized it was, if if you look back at the Granges of the early 20th century it was decentralized. It was private association – people coming together because of shared needs, and shared values. It's outside of the state structure. The Grange halls were the political and cultural center of the community, and they still can be. When Granges were thriving, that's what was going on. So people are kind of looking for things in the modern world, you know, connecting with people. There's kind of this false dichotomy in the United States where you have conservatism versus liberalism, and I think it's more complex than that. And I recognize that there's a third way, that maybe we can have people coming together again with shared needs or goals, but it's outside of the state structure, or the corporate structure … And maybe there's another dichotomy and that's centralism versus de-centralism, right? In the United States we have centralized democracy, centralized government, centralized economy, centralized markets with large retailers. That's OK. I don't want to tear that down. But I think there are opportunities, too, where you can have a de-centralized system, and if people come together through association then they can benefit. We did that this summer where we had a farmer's market. It's really simple; it's not a revolutionary idea or anything. It was economic development – opportunity for people, health, well-being because of the good local food. It was de-centralized, and then it was also outside of the state structure. I'm not an anti-statist or an anarchist or anything, wanting to bomb throw or smash the state, because I think we really need the state, especially with the law enforcement and our courts. We need that stability. But I think that maybe conservative people don't really want to pay taxes, or

Novoselic plays his twelve-string guitar to accompany the Grange pianist on "Home on the Range." He quips that it's really "Home on the Grange."
John Hughes, The Legacy Project

want more, have private initiative. You don't have to let people fall through the cracks. You can have a system where people come together and take care of each other. Traditionally in the United States, you had fraternal groups, the Grange, the Elks Club, the Moose Hall, the Eagles … There's all kinds of critters. (laughs)

Hughes: Neighbors of Woodcraft was another one back then.

Novoselic: And unions used to do it, too, and political parties. Then something happened in the United States in political association. Granges are closing and a lot of these fraternal groups are closing. I think that there is a vacuum – not only a vacuum locally with association, but also in our public sphere like the Legislature and our Congress. People don't vote or they're otherwise disconnected and that creates a vacuum. And who fills the vacuum? Special interests, money interests, the centralized corporate. It's the same thing. So, instead of just rushing from blog to blog and complaining about it, I'm just like, "Let's do something about it!" You have to go out and work with people. That's what politics are. It's just people. What are the needs of people?

I'm an active Democrat and that's an organization politically that speaks to a lot of my perspective of the way the government should be run, so I associate with that. But I also come to the Grange because there are also conservative people at the Grange. So it's more interesting. Instead of being divided by ideology, you can still have disagreements on policy and things but in the process you've discovered each other's humanity. You actually have some things in common. (Once a Grange meeting opens) there's decorum and there are rules – like you can't bring partisanship into the Grange … I try to be action oriented, issue oriented: "So what are we going to do here, how do we solve this problem?"

Hughes: So is there something of a misimpression about punk rock – That there were a lot of people in there who were nihilistic or anarchist …?

Novoselic: Oh absolutely.

Hughes: If you think about where you were fourteen years ago and where you are today – sort of "The Making of Krist Novoselic" – you were always about free speech and expression rather than overthrowing? You believed in rule of law, even back then in your "grunge" days?

Novoselic: Absolutely. And again it just has to do with your personal safety. I went to Croatia in 1993 and I saw the bomb-craters and the misery, the fear, the anger. And that happened when the rule of law collapsed. Then there was a vacuum, and people took the matters into their own hands. It's a downward spiral. It just gets really ugly. We can't say that it can't happen here, because it could happen anywhere.

Novoselic during the WTO demonstrations in Seattle in 1999. He was outraged by the vandalism he observed. Photo courtesy *Seattle Weekly*

Hughes One of the things that was fascinating to me was you being at the WTO demonstrations in Seattle in 1999. Tell us about what happened then – what kind of impression that made on you.

Novoselic: I was really disappointed. I was having a lot of fun. It was inspiring. There was this like carnival atmosphere. People were expressing themselves creatively. There was a lot of time put into that kind of expression, and just marching, organizing the demonstration. People did like Butoh Theatre (originating in post World War II Japan).

Hughes: Then people started doing vandalism.

Novoselic: That's what happened. And the way the law enforcement decided to approach the demonstration was they just drew lines, and you had these police cordons with the robocops and the riot gear. Then you had the masses on the other side. I'm not a law enforcement expert but I think it would have made more sense to just disperse the cops *in between* people, and then bust everybody who was doing an (illegal) act. There were just a lot of knuckle heads. They trashed a McDonald's. And it's just like, well, millions of people eat at McDonald's every day. It's like, "Why are you doing that?"

Hughes: Like "prole" food. It's where the proletariat eats.

Novoselic: I don't really care for McDonald's food, but it's like – what's the coin? "There's nothing worse than a socialist who hates people."

Hughes: That's a wonderful line.

Novoselic: Yeah, there's nothing worse than a socialist who hates people. It's like, "Why are you trashing McDonald's?" Its cheap food, a lot of people eat at McDonald's. So then they trashed Carroll's Jewelers – this nice independent jewelry store; smashed a window. There were these black-hoodie anarcho-mischief-makers who pushed these Dumpsters in the middle of the street there on Fifth Avenue. And they're just sitting on them like they're taking over. They're finally in their element, right. And I'm just like, "What are you going to do?" Now there's this vacuum. It's just like somebody is going to say to you, "No, that's my Dumpster." And they're going to say, "No, that's *my* dumpster." And *then* there's going to be this big flatbed truck full of a bunch of bruits, armed to the teeth, and they're just going to take you up to the hills there, in the Cascades, and you're just going to wind up in a mass grave. That's how they do things in Yugoslavia.

Hughes: I was thinking about them breaking the windows in the jewelry store. It's sort of like the Nazi thing – "Kristallnacht" – when they broke all the Jewish shop windows …

Novoselic: Oh yeah, it's terrible. But I don't think the motivation was anti-Semitism. I think the motivation was just stupidity, and instant gratification. It's just like you're reading all this anarcho-literature, and then finally here comes your moment and what do you do? It's so easy to smash a window. It's so easy to throw over a newspaper box, or throw it through the window of the department store; it's so easy to do. But it's not so easy to come to a meeting, like once a month or twice a month, and you have to deal with real issues with real people.

You can't blow up a social relationship. An anarchist pamphlet was published by these Australian anarchists in the late 1970s. Ironically, Croatian nationalists planted some bombs at the Yugoslav airlines somewhere in Australia, in the late '70s. And that just created an excuse for the government to clamp down on civil liberties. And it was a textbook example with Sept. 11, 2001 when those terrorists blew up the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon. Then the average person watches this atrocity and the reaction is moral outrage. Like, "Oh my god, this is a crime!" And so then the government comes in and says, "Absolutely, this is a crime." And then they start tamping down on civil

liberties and people were like, "Wait a minute, what's this 'Patriot Act'?" They passed this whole phonebook full of things and it's like, "We don't know what's going on." You can't blow up a social relationship. It's better to do community organizing and the kinds of things where you can speak to people's needs and you'll start bringing people in. Like here at the Grange we're serving food. It's just like, "Well what can we do?" "Let's just serve food." That's basic. And its good food and people come out and just eat food. Then we have our meeting – and there you have it. We're trying to deal with local issues and the Grange has done that for the past hundred years.

Hughes: Exactly. The PUDs, the open primary.

Novoselic: Absolutely. You know, they nationalized electricity – the Grange did in the 1930s.

Hughes: Is that a radical idea or what?

Novoselic: That's a *totally* radical idea.

Hughes: "Power to the people."

Novoselic: Well, it's not so radical in 2008 when the federal government of the United States has nationalized the banking institutions. So you have this ideological poison. People say, "Oh, well, the state's socialist, or we don't need socialized medicine." But the whole community here, we've benefited so much from public timber. That's socialized timber. The county owns the timber; the state administers the timber, and it goes to pay for schools; it goes to pay for the budget. And we'd have to pay for that in more taxes, but we benefit from the commonwealth and the trees. That's socialism is what it is. And so you get this polarizing rhetoric. I believe it has to do with the electoral system where the debate is just so narrow. You kind of have two different shades of the same. They're both the establishment parties, Democrats and Republicans. I think that there should be more voices out there. You'll just get a better debate.

Hughes: You were saying last night about how silly it was to exclude the third-party candidates from the presidential debates. "What kind of democracy is that?" you asked.

Novoselic: Especially after I watched the last two debate (between John McCain and Barack Obama). The first debate was good; the second debate was all right. They rehashed

it. And now the third debate, which I'm going to listen on the radio tonight, it's going to be the same thing … I'm not an economist, so I'm not going to comment on the 700-billion-dollar bailout. But there are candidates running for president who oppose the bailout. And so wouldn't it serve voters better to have one person up there – Bob Barr, Ralph Nader, whoever – of a different view? You had just the Democrat and the Republican, and they were on the same page. Wouldn't it be better to put them on the spot, the establishment candidates, to at least vigorously defend their proposal? They just kind of say, "Yeah, we're going to do it. It's going to help."

Hughes: So, when's this first stirring when you're thinking seriously about politics? Did this happen during Nirvana?

Novoselic urges the Hoquiam City Council to support bringing the Lollapalooza music festival to town in 1994.
The Daily World, Kathy Quigg

Novoselic: During Nirvana. I always read the newspaper and kept up on things. The punk rock in the 1980s was all very political; most of it was overtly political. I started to pay more attention in the early '90s when the Washington State Legislature passed the Erotic Music Law, which turned into "harmful to minors" legislation.

Hughes: Was the idea to prevent impressionable young minds from hearing smutty lyrics?

Novoselic: Yeah, there was music that was like that. I didn't really care for the music, and I didn't feel like defending it, but it seemed like it was going to affect me as an artist. And it was this crazy proposal where any prosecutor in the state of Washington could deem music harmful to minors.

Hughes: All 39 counties – you've got all these little censors?

Novoselic: Yeah, and the burden would be on the artist to defend that. And so if it was harmful to minors you would have a sticker in 48-point type on your CD or your record saying, "This is harmful to minors." That sticker is basically a stigma. So we would have to

fight that. Like, Nirvana could fight it; we would have to sic the attorneys on it. But there would be a lot of artists who couldn't afford to do so. So there you have the chilling effect where I can't say certain things. You'd be saying, "it sounds like I'm saying that, but as an artist I'm really saying this, which is very positive." So it is misunderstood by the censor and then the burden is on the artist to clear that up. Then you get the stigma of adult music, and then some retailers are uncomfortable with adult music.

Hughes: Wal-Mart.

Novoselic: Yeah, so you have the adult music section of the record store, or they won't carry it at all, so then you'd have these adult music stores and you're next to a strip club. It's a slippery slope is what it is. And you get into the basic censorship arguments like, "Are you going to kill the messenger for the message?" Ice T had a tune called "Cop Killer." It was about somebody in the African-American street gang culture, about killing a cop. So that steered a lot of controversy. But you could also look at that song like a warning bell. It's like, "Why is there so much antagonism towards law enforcement in these communities?" So you're killing the messenger for the message. The problem isn't the song "Cop Killer." The problem is what's going on in these communities, and there's a bad relationship between law enforcement and the communities. So that's what we need to fix. That's complicated. It's easier to go after the artist. And another thing too is that if you're a lawmaker or a politician and you're running for office you have in your campaign literature, "Look what I've done for teen violence. Look what I've done for teen pregnancy and drug abuse. I have banned all this music." It looks really good, but you haven't done anything!

Hughes: Is that when JAMPAC came into being, the Joint Artists and Music Promotions Political Action Committee?

Novoselic: JAMPAC started as the Washington Music Industry Coalition. The community was reacting to the erotic music bill, reacting to the teen dance ordinance. At the same time, Seattle music was exploding all over the world. And Grunge music was synonymous with the Space Needle, Mount Rainier and Seattle. We were also in this really bad anti-music regulatory environment. So there was a lot of misunderstanding of what was

going on. We decided to become *proactive,* and our proactive message was, "Our music community brings economic and cultural vitality to the city and to the state. We are an *asset* and not a liability." We took that message to lawmakers, to state agencies, to fans, to the music industry, to the media. We got a good response and we developed relationships, and we started turning this around.

Hughes: Who were some of your real supporters there in the Legislature that you formed a key alliance with?

Novoselic: Brad Owen was a friend – *is* a friend. Sen. Bill Finkbeiner was a friend – *is* a friend. Sid Snyder, when he was the Senate Majority Leader. And he might have been in the minority for a while—

Hughes: Yep, for a little bit, I recall.

Novoselic: He was a friend, and he recognized the power of music. And the Seattle City Council turned around. Mayor Greg Nickels is good with music. And we had someone like Paul Allen, who built this beautiful museum for Northwest music.

Hughes: That was a real contribution wasn't it? A guy who made a lot of money and then did something to improve the cultural climate.

Novoselic: It's fabulous. And the Frank Gehry building for the Experience Music Project is just top-notch, just done so well. We're really lucky to have that. That's a real attraction for Seattle and Washington State. People come to our state because of how strong we are. Washington State exports food around the world, exports technology, aircraft, timber, natural resources, and it exports a lot of culture with the music. The Experienced Music Project is a destination. It's really important.

Hughes: So you were victorious, you carried the day in opposing the "harmful to minors" legislation?

Novoselic: I think so. I think it wasn't so much about the legislation, it was the sensibilities changed. It just doesn't make sense, this punitive kind of thing. I didn't mention Dow Constantine. He was really good when he was in the Legislature, and he was chair of the House Judiciary Committee. So we were successful in turning the sensibilities around. We worked with the Washington State Liquor Control Board, too.

Hughes: Was that on the teen dance ordinance – the adults only issue?

Novoselic: That concerned minors in an establishment that served alcohol. Our message was really simple. The Washington State Liquor Control Board has a serious and important job regulating alcohol, which is a powerful drug. So you need to keep regulating alcohol. We don't have a problem with that. We don't want minors to be served alcohol; we want minors to be able to hear music.

So you have a private enterprise that's working within the regulatory structure and they see that there's an opportunity: "Well, if we have an all ages show, we can pay the bands more. We can bring people into the club." But at the same time our liquor licenses are our bread and butter so we have a *huge* incentive not to serve minors alcohol. And I don't know of any infractions where clubs have been busted for it because it doesn't make sense. When the Liquor Control Board realized that, it was like, "Oh, we still get to regulate alcohol?" Absolutely, that's not our beef. Our beef is that you're regulating entertainment.

Hughes: So were Kurt Cobain and Dave Grohl, your bandmates, really sympathetic to these efforts too, doing things in their own way?

Novoselic: Well, I really got involved after Nirvana, like '95 was when it started. I just had a lot more time.

Hughes: But earlier all three fellows in the band had a really strong sensibility about marginalized people – gays, lesbians, and—

Novoselic: Yes, a lot of it was just about inclusion and fairness. That's what it basically boiled down to. So we were into human rights, which are women's rights – sexual orientation.

Hughes: So at the WTO – I had to get back to that because I read in your book that there was a defining moment when you yell at some people doing vandalism, something to the effect, "How would you like it?"

Novoselic: Yeah, this person was up on this awning of this hotel. I think it was the Westin, and just wrote some stupid slogan with spray-paint. And I was just appalled by that, and I yelled at them – I go, "How would you like it if somebody did that to your house?" And these other people who were standing next to me yelled "F you!" at me. And I'm like,

"Man, you know this is supposed to be a non-violent protest, and that's violence against property." So I just left in disgust. Its like, "There you go. There's your anarchy, kids. Whoopee."

Hughes: Yeah, what's the end-all of that? What's that going to lead to?

Novoselic: But here you look at the "Teen Spirit" video where all the kids freak out and take over – the anarchy "A." Maybe you reap what you sow. I don't know.

Hughes: I was such a square that when I first saw that I thought that that was an Aberdeen High School thing. I thought that was the "A" for Aberdeen. I didn't get it until somebody explained it to me.

Novoselic: It was anarchy.

Hughes: So those weren't Aberdeen High School cheerleading uniforms?

Novoselic: No, they were strippers. I didn't hire them. I was talking to these women, and I was like, "Well, what do you do?" They're like, "We're dancers." I'm like, "Oh."

Hughes: Exotic dancers in that video. That's amazing.

Novoselic: Exotic dancers. I go, "Oh, I get it."

Hughes: So we go from 1999. What happens next in the political consciousness raising of Krist Novoselic? After WTO.

Novoselic: Well at the same time I was working with the music community and learning about political participation and how the Legislature works – how the process works. And this real appreciation grew of the process. Then I started to recognize there were barriers to participation – uncontested elections, uncompetitive elections. The system just didn't make sense. Like, why are these people running unopposed for so long? And why are people not voting? I'm so enthusiastic about democracy, I'm discovering this process. Or maybe I'm fooling myself or I'm being idealistic or whatever. So I had this crisis for a while. At the time I was on the Internet – it was 1997 – and I was just rooting around and I discovered these election reforms, proportional voting, and instant-runoff, ranked choice voting. It was really fascinating. It's like, "Wow, this is a really *different* way to do elections. And here are the benefits, this is how it would change things." Coming out of the whole alternative music world, I recognized these reforms and I was like, "Hey, this could really

change democracy. It will shake things up, but at the same time it won't tear things down."

Hughes: Tell us about instant-runoff voting. How does it work?

Novoselic: Instant-runoff voting is a majoritarian voting system. Say we're at a Grange meeting, when you vote for the state Grange Master at the state convention. Here's how a traditional majoritarian voting system works: You have say five candidates who want to run for this chairmanship. And you pass out ballots to all the voters, and the voters write down their favorite candidate. Then you pick up the ballots and count them. If somebody gets a majority – their name is on the most ballots – they win. If there's no majority, you kick off the last place candidate and you pass out a second ballot. So my candidates is still in the race so I'm going to put her name down again. But some voters whose candidate was kicked off, they've got to put down a second choice. You pick up the ballots. You count the ballots. If somebody has a majority of ballots, they win. There's no majority, you kick out the last place candidate and you pass out a third ballot. Well, people are looking at the clock, thinking, "I got to get out of here … my kids" or whatever.

Hughes: And you're spending money on extra ballots.

Novoselic: Ballots and time – counting them, etc.

OK, here's the third ballot. My candidate, she's still in the race. I'm going to put her name down again. But the next person, their first choice was kicked out, and now their *second* choice has been kicked out; so they've got to do a third choice. Well, maybe now they've voted for the candidate that I like too. So they're coming toward me, or they're coming toward somebody else; they're getting a third choice. We pick up the ballots; we count the ballots, get everybody's attention because everybody's hanging out waiting for the results. It's 10:30 at night. It's late. Why couldn't we have just passed out a ballot that had a first choice, a second choice and a third choice? It's the same system. There's a lot of misconceptions about ranked choice voting – people claiming it was thought up by Ralph Nader supporters after the 2000 election over a bottle of wine on some live-in boat in Port Townsend. The notion that they just wrote the whole scheme on the back of a napkin. But the truth is, "No, it was invented in the mid-19th century. It was, Thomas Hare, a barrister in the United Kingdom.

With the Industrial Revolution, more upper-class people were worried about the movement toward democracy, the American Revolution, the House of Commons, democracy expanding throughout the continent. They were worried that as the standard of living rose, the masses would have more voice. Instead of having this top-down feudal system – a king system – there was the movement toward democracy. So how do we have a system where there's majority rule but a minority voice?

Hughes: Tell us how.

Novoselic: They were basically worried about their stature as more upper-class Englishmen, and so they came up with this idea – ranked choice voting, the "single transferable vote." And they started using it in Australia in the late 19th century. Ireland adopted it for its elections in the 1920s. It came over to the United States in the earlier 20th century when there was a progressive reform. It was gaining traction to where the state of Oregon amended its constitution *explicitly* to accommodate ranked choice voting. It's still in the Oregon Constitution. If they wanted to do ranked choice voting they could do it *tomorrow*.

Hughes: Amazing. I didn't know that.

Novoselic: And so the New York City Council adopted it; Cambridge, Mass., adopted it; Cincinnati, Ohio, a bunch of cities.

Hughes: What stalled its advance in Washington state?

Novoselic: What stalled its advance was the direct primary, what we call the pick-a-party primary in Washington. It was a way to dilute the influence of party bosses, machine politics. But ranked choice voting gives the independent candidates more opportunity because you give voters more choices. You can rank the candidate. Also, when you have a single member district, in like a ward or a district or whatever, a lot of times who draws that district settles the election. You get a gerrymander. So when you have a multi-member district – three seats, four seats, five, six, nine seats, maybe. Then you only need a proportion of the vote; 10 percent, 20 percent, 25 percent of the vote, to get elected. So you can allow more votes, and you get a majority rule but a minority gets to vote. The minority gets to sit at the table too.

But no election system is perfect. I mean ranked choice voting isn't perfect either. We're having a ranked choice voting election in Pierce County. Pierce County Democrats nominated two candidates. And now it's up to the party organization, the private association, to urge voters to rank those candidates as a first and second choice. But it's up to the voter to determine who they're going to rank, if they decide to rank any candidate at all.

Hughes: How did Pierce County come to be able to do this? Is there something in the charter there?

Novoselic: Yeah, it was a charter amendment. I was involved in doing that.

Hughes: Besides being more economical to have ranked choice voting, I thought you pointed out in *Of Grunge and Government* that if you got the majority of first place votes you were going to win regardless. But that in a really crowded race where so many candidates were so close, that you'd get more of an expression of the people's will. It would be fairer.

Novoselic: It's not fairer. It seems more practical and more attuned to the sensibilities of the modern world where people are more sophisticated. There was that joke years ago that, "Oh well, his VCR is still blinking 12:00." And now people are going into their computers and they're tweaking the preferences, I think people are more sophisticated.

Hughes: So when you came onto ranked choice voting, tell us about what role you played to lobby for it

Novoselic: Well there was an opportunity in Pierce County. Kelly Haughton was elected to the Charter Review Commission in Pierce County and he was a strong advocate of ranked choice voting. I'd met Kelly and at the time I was on the board of directors for FairVote. I'm the chairman now. So Kelly did a good job of convincing his charter review board members to put ranked choice voting on the ballot, and they did. And so it was up the voters of Pierce County. We put resources together, and put a campaign together, and we

Novoselic in a public appearance on behalf of FairVote.
Photo courtesy *Seattle Weekly*

made the case to Pierce County voters. In November of 2006, 53 percent of voters approved ranked choice voting.

We had the wind to our back because of the direct primary, which is also known as the pick-a-party primary. In Washington State it was very unpopular. And we marketed ranked choice as an alternative to pick-a-party, so I think that was a huge boost to the campaign. There was a problem and we proposed a solution. The ranked choice voting election in Pierce County is historic in our state.

Hughes: What would it take to implement ranked choice voting statewide? Would that take a vote of the people?

Novoselic: It probably should. The Legislature could do it if it really wanted to. But I suspect it would be a vote of the people; it would be a referendum.

We had a version of ranked choice voting in Washington in the early 20th century. You'd have a second choice in the primary. It's not really ranked choice voting. But there's a precedent and a legal ruling in the Washington State Supreme Court that you can make a first choice and a second choice. The Washington State Supreme Court upheld that system. And again it's been upheld in federal courts, too.

So far the implementation of true ranked choice voting is going well in Pierce County The county is doing a good job. The Secretary of State's Office participated and is doing a good job. It's done in good faith. It's the first time we're doing it, so I'm sure there's going to be some lumps and bumps, but so far the system seems to be functioning fine. There's four candidates running for county executive. They're campaigning in a ranked choice environment. There's one candidate who has a "Number 1" on their sign, so they're urging candidates to have a "1." There are two Democrats running for the county council seat in the Puyallup area, and they've endorsed each other.

Hughes: I heard that on NPR the other day.

Novoselic: Yeah, they're endorsing each other, so there's less negative campaigning right there. There's some implementation cost, some initial cost that I think the county will recoup after a few elections because what happens is the ranked choice voting folds the primary into the general election. A lot of voters want a shorter campaign season. Those

promises that we made during the campaign are materializing.

Hughes: Tell us about FairVote.

Novoselic: FairVote is an election reform organization started in 1992 by Rob Richie and Steven Hill. The objective of FairVote is to speak to a lot of the needs of voters and a lot of the issues with elections and democracy in the United States. What we're proposing is a fundamental change in the way we hold elections. It goes back to the history of ranked choice voting, and the fact that in the United States we do have proportional voting, proportional representation. There is a traditional way of doing it in the United States – less preferential voting, which is a ranked choice system. In continental Europe, a lot of places in the world use a party list system. The tradition in the United States is a more independent oriented system of the preferential ballot. There's two ways you can do that for a single office – with the instant runoff voting (IRV) and with single transferable vote choice voting for proportional elections. We're working with local communities that for various reasons recognize the benefits of ranked choice voting. It's on the ballot now in Memphis, Tenn., after the charter review commission unanimously voted to put it on the ballot. The big reason is consolidating elections; you have one election instead of two.

Hughes: You could save millions?

Novoselic: You could save millions of dollars in a place like Memphis, Tenn. We're proposing it in Los Angeles. Last year there was a runoff election, a traditional top-two runoff non-partisan election in Los Angeles. The turnout was 6 percent. At the same time the cost to taxpayers was 100 percent to administer this election. So there's these practical benefits, and voters want more choices.

We're proposing ranked choice voting for municipal elections, local elections, and get people used to the process and the administration of these elections. In the next decade, start to have a statewide implementation. I think Colorado is a good prospect. The Colorado Legislature passed a local option bill for communities to use IRV, STV if they want to. Washington State is another good prospect because of the turmoil with the primary elections. California is another good prospect because of the ranked choice voting elections that are being conducted, like in San Francisco. Oregon is another good prospect.

Hughes: Are you conflicted at all, given how interesting you find the Grange, that they were key lobbyists for the blanket primary in the 1930s. Then in recent years it was declared unconstitutional and the Grange pushed for a top two primary. As both a big "D" and a little "d" person, you have these issues revolving around the political parties' "freedom of association" and the top two primary. How do you see the top two primary?

Novoselic: Well, the top two primary in my opinion is basically a non-partisan election, like a top two municipal election. What makes it different is that when they declare their candidacy, each candidate has the opportunity to put a 16-character, or 16-letter statement, or less, next to their name. So they can put any kind of (identifier) to the voter (e.g. "Republican" or "Prefers GOP"). And the rules of the top two election say that whatever the (identifier), it doesn't necessarily apply any kind of association or affiliation with a private political organization. So it's kind of like "buyer beware." So a voter would have to put faith into what the candidate is saying or look into what their association is. I think that puts a burden on the private association because now you could have somebody who could say they prefer the Grange party. And the Grange is a non-partisan organization. We don't run candidates for office. But in the world of politics there are people who are real opportunists and they could use the good name of the Grange and run for office. We could have a good discussion on how practical that would be. And the Grange could promote that that person isn't affiliated, but that puts a burden on the Grange or any private association. We have a lot going on and now we've got to run ads that say, "No, this candidate isn't a Grange candidate." So that's why I oppose the top two primary.

Another thing is that when you have a bona fide political party, Democrats and Republicans, you have the rank and file of the party; they're going to the meetings; they're putting events together – a bake sale, pancake breakfast, barbeque – and then they're trying to do everything that a political association does except they don't nominate candidates. They can nominate a candidate but then you could have another candidate who could just say that they prefer the Democratic Party or prefer the Republican Party. What you've done is you've sidelined the political association, the grass-roots of it. At the same time you have the House Democratic Campaign Committee, the House Republican

Campaign Committee, the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee, and so forth, and you have the state Democratic Party, and the state Republican Party. These legislative organizations that really benefit from the incumbency. They're just multi-million-dollar, soft money conduits. They're a conduit around a hard money contribution. You can only give so much money to a candidate. There are different limits, if any limits at all, to give to these political organizations. At the same time you have people who can't afford to give any kind of contribution but maybe they can bake cookies for the bake sale, and you sidelined all the people on the grass-roots. And that's why I oppose it.

Hughes: So bring this all full circle. What you're campaigning for – FairVote and the various causes you've been affiliated with, to promote more representative participatory democracy. We know that Washingtonians got PO'd because with the pick-a-party primary they said, "You're not telling me who to vote for."

Novoselic: As chairman of FairVote, I can tell you that we're promoting systems that accommodate political association. Whether it's one of the two dominant parties in the United States, or you could start a new party, or promote an existing minor party. At the same time you also create opportunities for independent candidates. If you look at what's going on in Pierce County right now, with the county executive race. There are four candidates running for county executive. There are two Democrats nominated by the Democratic Party, there's one Republican nominated by the Republican Party, and there's one independent candidate. It's up to the voters to decide who is best going to represent them. So do you want a non-partisan or a partisan system? Well, you kind of have both now. You just give voters more choices and it's up to the voter to decide to nominate them. So you have political association, you could have the American Medical Association, the trial attorneys, the insurance companies , the trade unions, the real estate agents – they all have an association. Well, why can't citizens have an association where they nominate candidates and stand up for election? And maybe they don't have the bread, money, to give a campaign contribution but they can put some time in and get their people to stand for election. The Grange is a private association. You have the subordinate Granges, the memberships in the communities. They elect delegates who go to the state convention.

You vote on resolutions. The Grange has a presence in the legislature. So it's all about political association.

Hughes: If you were running for Secretary of State or Lieutenant Governor right now, what would your platform be to tell the voters how a primary would work? There would be instant-runoff? We wouldn't have a primary?

Novoselic: We wouldn't have a primary. And, OK, this is what I would like to see in Washington State: We would have four-member state house districts.

Hughes: "Super districts"?

Novoselic: It would be super districts. You'd have four state house members and then you could either have two state senators from each district. I don't know if that works with the state Constitution. Or we can change the Constitution. We accommodate changing times. In the state House races, you would have the single transferable vote process, so you would have four seats to fill, and a candidate would need 20 percent of the vote to get elected. So you wouldn't have these safe seat districts any more. Every seat for the Washington State House would be competitive. So if you're a Republican here in the 19th district, you're going to elect a Republican; if you're Democrat you're going to elect a Democrat; if you're an independent you can have an independent. Maybe we'll have a Green Party or a Libertarian Party House member.

Hughes: Because it's proportional?

Novoselic: It's proportional. It's a very *conservative* version of proportional voting. In Israel you need like one and a half percent, two percent. The Council of Europe criticized Russia for its threshold – seven percent to get into the Duma, which is a *huge* barrier to independent small parties, their opposition parties. With the proposed Washington State version, we have a conservative version of proportional voting. You'd need 20 percent to get elected. Each voter gets four choices. You vote for every one of those seats. It's the ranked choice system I explained earlier. You can eliminate people. And then you also have this surplus that you have to kind of redistribute. So every seat for the state House would be competitive. For the state Senate, you'd have two senators coming out of every district. You could have position one, position two. And so what you basically have is kind of like a

mixed member proportional system where you have a proportional system in the House, and then you have a single member, single position seat in the Senate.

Hughes: So the Senate really wouldn't change much?

Novoselic: The Senate wouldn't change much. You would have Republican Senate districts and Democrat Senate districts. Or we could even do some kind of system where you'd have a Republican and a Democrat. It would be what the Senate is supposed to be. It's the upper body, it's the higher chamber, it's a four-year term. Then we still have a governor, and it's a ranked choice voting situation to elect a governor. So you get all the choices that we now get in August, but it would only be on one November ballot.

Hughes: So as I understand it in the super districts, to make the Legislature more democratic, so to speak, and to give more people a say in the process, the super districts would follow the Congressional district lines?

Novoselic: That was just one proposal; I mean we can do whatever we want. That was to make things really simple because they already have drawn the congressional districts.

Hughes: One man, one vote. And the idea that you would have a Legislature that would contain independent parties as long as they met that threshold. It would be a lot more representative body.

Novoselic: Right.

Hughes: "The people's house."

Novoselic: You'd have a lower House. New ideas would get kicked upstairs to the Senate and the Senate ideas would kick back downstairs, and the governor would veto something she or he didn't like. It's not a parliamentary system. It's not a unicameral legislature where the prime minister is the head of the coalition. It's the American version of proportional voting. The *Washington State* version of proportional voting. Most people don't pay attention to the legislature, so what the heck. (laughs) I think maybe some more people would pay more attention. Just like, "We need 20 percent of the vote to get our candidate in the Legislature. I think we can do this in our district, so let's go out there and get these people in, all right?" You can say, "Well, in our party we're going to have to nominate four people, but I don't think we should just nominate these four white guys," or whatever

is your angle. "We're going to nominate a logger. We're going to nominate a fisherman. We're going to nominate a mill worker, and we're going to nominate a secretary." However, you're going to have to work things out. "This is what we need to do with our nominations." Nominations, again, are messy. People want to get the nominations. That's private association, right?

Hughes: Yes it is.

Novoselic: And you could have some associations where they still have smoke-filled back rooms. And you could say, "I'm not voting for those jerks." Or "I like this association because their nomination rules comport to the guidelines of the League of Women Voters." The League of Women Voters has developed this program that declares "We're inclusive and transparent." And if you meet that criteria then you can use a League of Women Voters bug on your campaign literature.

Hughes: A stamp of approval.

Novoselic: A stamp of approval. So voters are like, "Well I don't know what party to vote for. There are all these parties. Who are all the candidates? Oh well, they have the League of Women Voters 'bug' and I like that party." Others will say, "I've been a Republican my whole life. " While some will say, "I'm a Democrat." Then you get some people who go, "I'm from the Green Party, I'm a Libertarian, or I'm an independent." Or if you're a true independent you say, "I think this person has done a lot for this community and this state and this district. I'm going to vote them as my second choice." And they may be a Democrat, but they conclude that this Republican is really good, too: "She makes a lot of sense; I like what she's saying"

Hughes: When you were 18 years old, you got to vote for the first time.

Novoselic: It was '84.

Hughes: So you were looking at Reagan and Bush and Mondale and Ferraro.

Novoselic: What's the boulevard when you come into Aberdeen by the Wishkah Mall?

Hughes: That's Wishkah Boulevard.

Novoselic: The voting place was right down from the Taco Bell. There was a union hall there. And I walked into the union hall – that was my precinct – and there was this *huge*

painting of Lyndon B. Johnson. And I walked in there, got my ballot and voted for Walter Mondale.

Hughes: So there's the first stirring of your activism. Are there any other key facets of electoral reform that we didn't cover?

Novoselic: There's the national popular vote, an interstate compact between states where it's up to the legislature to determine the manner of portioning the electors. The idea is that there is an interstate compact where the winner of the national popular vote gets the state's electoral vote.

Hughes: Have you ever been to a national convention?

Novoselic: No I haven't. I've been to a state convention.

Hughes: How do you see things shaking out in this election? Being chairman of the county Democrats, I assume that you're strongly an Obama guy. If so, what does he represent? Is this a breakthrough kind of election if we were able to elect a person of color?

Novoselic: I think so. Barack Obama is also white. I mean he's an Irish guy, too – right? … And black or white, he's been to Harvard; he's been on the ground with the community organizing. The world has changed a lot, even in the last eight to 10 years, and we're going to be in more of a global world. The economic crisis that's going on in 2008 is not just about the United States. It's a global crisis. And we're all connected through our markets and our economies. And I think if Barack Obama is elected president, because of his heritage – his father is from Africa – that puts a multicultural face on a leader of the free world, and it's the new globalism.

Hughes: The band was in Europe during the fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989, weren't you?

Novoselic: Yes, Nirvana was in transit to Berlin in November, two or three days after the Berlin Wall fell.

Hughes: What was that like?

Novoselic: It was amazing. It's just one of those moments when history is in the air, and you can just feel it. There was a sea change going on, and things changed for the better. That whole crony, crappy communism of Eastern Europe just went away.

Hughes: Then you made several trips to Yugoslavia right in throes of this terrible, atrocity-laced kind of war.

Novoselic: I went to Zadar, and I was in Zagreb, but I never went into the trenches or anything, or deep into the hills. I always kind of kept a safe distance from things. That experience shaped my world view about the rule of law and stability. You get the vacuum of law and order and things can get really ugly. "Oh, it can't happen here."

Hughes: If you had been raised in Croatia you would have been right in the thick of that, wouldn't you? Wouldn't you have been conscripted to be in the military?

Novoselic: Probably. When I was in Zadar – I think it was 2000 – they had a memorial day for all the fallen soldiers. There had been a big battle to save Zadar from the invaders. When you look at all the birthdays (on the headstones) and its all mid-'60s. These men were in their early twenties. And what compelled them to fight? They were fighting for their homes and their families. And they went down fighting. They fought like hell.

Hughes: Probably some of your school mates.

Novoselic: Oh yeah, absolutely. And it's a terrible thing. And ironically with what happened to the former Yugoslavia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, now Serbians and Croatians, soon they're going to be united in the Federal European Union, another federation.

Hughes: Are you hopeful for that, Krist? Do you think that that's good, that some of those ancient animosities and tribal stirrings and religious issues —

Novoselic: I don't think those issues were that big. I think that the people who manipulated those just lit the fire of nationalism to their own benefit. You've got to remember too that the Croatians and Serbians and Bosnians lived together for many years. We can't forget that. And you had Croatians who whipped up nationalist hysteria. And they did so not with the best intentions.

Hughes: Do you still maintain close contacts with people you knew from school there, relatives? I know your dad is retired there on an island.

Novoselic: I talk with my dad regularly.

Hughes: If I recall correctly I read something to the effect that when he was on – I'll botch this again—" Izich" …

Novoselic: "Eeeejeez." (Rhymes with "jeeze")

Hughes: From where he lived on the island he was watching Zadar being shelled …

Novoselic: You could hear it. Yeah it was pretty bad. And he got buzzed by planes.

Hughes: Is there anything that you feel passionately about that you wished I'd asked about with regard to political there and what could make it better?

Novoselic: No.

Hughes: Well, you flirted with an idea that got a lot of publicity, when you were thinking about running for Lieutenant Governor. Is that still in the back of your mind as a logical kind of extension of what you've been doing?

Novoselic: That didn't make sense, so I just didn't do it. I'm pretty happy here with what I'm doing. I'm doing a lot of important work. Chairmanship with FairVote and I'm doing local community things with the Grange.

Hughes: So you can be an activist without all the fishbowl?

Novoselic: Yeah, I think so. And I don't have to live in Olympia. I lived in Olympia in 1990. I mean it's a great place. I just don't want to live in Olympia. I don't want to live in Seattle. I like Seattle. I like Tacoma. I lived in Tacoma. I like Longview. I like Aberdeen.

Hughes: In Kurt Cobain's journal there's that classic quote about, "Aberdeen's not being partial to any kind of weirdo new wavers and 'faggots' " – this real angry riff. Did Aberdeen get a bum rap, or was that just Kurt being mischievous?

Novoselic: Kurt had bad experiences in Aberdeen. I didn't really have those experiences. I never got beat up, like Kurt got beat up.

Hughes: No doubt about it – he got assaulted?

Novoselic: Yeah, he got assaulted. He got in trouble for some vandalism or something, and some police dog bit him. So it's those kinds of things. And just Kurt's temperament too. He had some strong opinions and …he could bite. I think that Aberdeen, yeah, got a bad rap. I hope that I didn't contribute to it, or I hope we have made amends for it. I've been all over the world. I've lived in different places, and Aberdeen is not a lot different from any other place. There's good things and there's bad things. There's humanity. I was in Anchorage, Alaska, in 1998 and I was just kind of checking the town out and I go, "You know this is what Aberdeen would have looked like in 1998 if the economy had sustained itself."

Hughes: Exactly.

Novoselic: It just had this bum rap. So you get these problems, it doesn't matter where they are. … The economy goes down, people lose opportunity, there's domestic violence, drug abuse. I mean that's been part of my life, I've seen it firsthand. Domestic violence, substance abuse, dysfunction, and when there's that lack of opportunity that just exacerbates that, it just makes it worse. And so that's what the problem is. It's not Aberdeen or it's not any other place.

Hughes: What do you think about the efforts by Jeff Burlingame, Leland Cobain and some of the other people in the Kurt Cobain Memorial Society to build a youth center in Aberdeen?

Novoselic: Right on. That's all good! It's all good work. It's in good faith. Again it's people coming together. You can do it with public dollars or you can do it with private dollars – public initiative, private initiative, the goals are the same. It's to create opportunities for people, for people to come together. Another problem is isolation. People become isolated. We're human beings. We're social creatures. We're not solitary. And so how do you battle isolation? You have social events and bring people in.

Hughes: Doug Barker who is the managing editor at *The Daily World* in Aberdeen lives right around the corner from a Christian church on Market Street. He said that when you and Kurt were growing up there was a sign out front that said, "Come as you are." He advanced the theory that Kurt walked by there – you might have walked by there – and took note of the sign. Do you think that had any influence on that great song – "Come as You Are"?

Novoselic: I have no idea. I know there's a Christian Center, church, in Longview that has "Come as you are" on its sign. … If you look at social structures – associations outside of the state – I think the evangelical community are leaders on providing services for people.

Hughes: It looks like there is a lot of that here in Naselle, Deep River. I saw a lot of churches.

Novoselic: There's Valley Bible Church. It's a new church. And people who share that world view can come together for their own common benefit, and that's what it should be about – freedom.

Hughes: One thing that people who followed the band have always been curious about is the first time that you laid eyes on Kurt Cobain and what you thought of him?

Novoselic: I don't remember.

Hughes: There's one story that your brother Robert introduced you to him.

Novoselic: I think that's when it was, Robert brought him over to my house.

Hughes: Robert's two years younger than you are?

Novoselic: Three years.

Hughes: He would have been in the same class because Kurt is three years younger than you are, right?

Novoselic: Kurt was born in February '67, and I was May '65. I might have saw Kurt at the high school or just kind of on the periphery. And then I started to get to know him …

Hughes: You'd known Buzz Osborne and Matt Lukin and Dale Crover of the Melvins and had been interested in that band. And then Kurt came along and had the same sort of eureka moment, that, "Man, is this incredible stuff?" That happened to me—I was 20 years older than you guys, I heard them in the parking lot at Pick-Rite Thriftway in Montesano … It was just amazing.

Novoselic: Yeah it was cool. It was different. It was completely unique. It was fresh. It was vital. It was—

Hughes: Loud!

Novoselic: It was *loud*. It was compelling. It was mischievous … kind of a rebellion.

Hughes: There's the story that Kurt had this cassette of things he had done with this wonderfully named band, Fecal Matter. Is that a true story that you heard that?

Novoselic: I heard that song "Spank Thru" and I go, "This is a really good song."

Hughes: Was that on the Fecal Matter thing – Spank Thru?

Novoselic: I think so... Yeah, he gave me this cassette. I thought it was really good. It's a well put together song. It's got a hook. It's kind of unique. It sounds different. I could play guitar and I could play bass, so (we got together).

Hughes: So what was that like? When did you guys first start to get together to make music?

Novoselic: ’87.

Hughes: 1987. And where typically did that happen, over at Dale Crover’s place?

Novoselic: No, no. Kurt was working. I had a job too, but he had this house over on, I think it was 2nd Street. And we just started rehearsing there.

Hughes: Were you still working in fast food, or are you working for Foster Paint by then?

Novoselic: I don’t know what I was doing. I worked for Root Painting, too. And I worked at Sears for a while.

Hughes: At Sears Roebuck?

Novoselic: Yeah, on the South Side at the mall.

Hughes: What did you do there at that wonderful mall?

Novoselic: I worked in the warehouse.

Hughes: So nobody was making much money. Did you have an automobile? Could you get around?

Novoselic: Yeah, I had my trusty Volkswagen.

Hughes: Is it true that you and Kurt decide that to make some money that you would have a Credence Clearwater Revival cover band?

Novoselic: Yeah, we had cover songs that we were going to play at a tavern. But it was just kind of something to do to screw around on the side. He played drums.

Hughes: Was he any good at drums?

Novoselic: Yeah.

Hughes: Who was the drummer at that time sort of hanging around, was it Aaron Burckhard?

Novoselic: Aaron Burckhard.

Hughes: I wonder what he’s up to.

Novoselic: I don’t know, I think he was going to community college or something.

Hughes: Was it a band?

Novoselic: No, we played like once or twice and got bored with it.

Hughes: The notion of you guys playing “Proud Mary” is pretty interesting, although John Fogerty (of Creedence Clearwater Revival) is an interesting guy.

Novoselic: I don't think we played "Proud Mary." We might have had like four or five songs.

Hughes: Did you read the new book by your former manager, Danny Goldberg, "Bumping Into Geniuses"?

Novoselic: No I need to read it.

Hughes: He quotes you as saying that ironically, for all atmosphere of punk rock, "You know who wanted to reach more people the most of the three of us? Kurt, he wanted to make it big." I'm kind of fascinated by that. Did you guys talk about that when you first got together – that you wanted to make it big?

Novoselic: We didn't talk about it a lot. Kurt would. He had his ideas on how he wanted to promote things, like we need to buy billboards, or we need to do this and that. And I'm like, sure it makes sense, but …

Hughes: Buy billboards?

Novoselic: Yeah, buy billboards.

Hughes: How ironic is that for a punk rocker guy? Did you guys ever think back then in your wildest imagination of what it would be like to be huge?

Novoselic: I never did because just watching what was going on, on the home television and then the radio. And living on the margins for so long, living in the underground scene it's like, "Oh this will never catch on." But it did, and it was starting to change where you had bands like Faith No More and Jane's Addiction. They were these rock bands but they were more like alternative or edgy. Then they paved the way for Nirvana. And then Nirvana, again, was at the right place at the right time. Made a really good record. It was slick, and accessible, and full of a lot of pop hooks. That's when rock music really wasn't happening, so "Nevermind" was released and there was "Smells Like Teen Spirit," which was a phenomenal tune, and a lot of energy. So that compelled the people to buy the record and they discovered the rest of the work on the record. People really liked it.

Hughes: I've heard a lot of songwriters and musicians say that they knew when they finished something that they really had something in the can that was going to be great. Did you have that feeling?

Novoselic: Yeah, because I remember when Butch Vig, our producer, put up the rough mixes of that song and he goes, "You've got to hear this tune." He's just like cranking it up on the mixer. And I'm like, "Wow, yeah, that rocks."

Hughes: The change of tempos in there and that refrain just before it breaks into the vocal is just amazing. But some musicians kind of get bored with keeping the audience satisfied and playing the same thing over and over again. Did you ever get to the point where you thought, "God, I don't want to play 'Teen Spirit' again"?

Novoselic: We kind of flirted with that, but we always played it. You know there was so much going on, and it was such a whirlwind that the shows were a component. In a lot of ways just to play shows was good to just do the music, keep it about the music.

Hughes: Well the energy from that must have been incredible. Do you miss that, Krist?

Novoselic: I can. I mean I've played some shows with Flipper. I just like playing.

Hughes: So Nirvana went to Europe on that first really big tour, and I gather the reception you were getting then was a lot more fervor than what had happened when you were in Cheney or Bellingham or wherever you're playing.

Novoselic: When "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (was released as a single) we did this club tour. And the song was (catching on), and more and more people were coming to the shows. We'd get these label rep folks that said, "Hey, your song just got added to the rock station here." And I'm like, "Well that's cool." There was a buzz and so we were selling the places out.

Hughes: How big were those venues – small clubs?

Novoselic: They were small clubs, yeah. And then we just got on a plane and went over to Europe and that's when the whole phenomenon happened. The song just exploded.

Hughes: Was there one particular night were you went out there and you thought, "Holy crap, this is incredible. It's beyond my wildest expectations"?

Novoselic: It seemed like there was all this momentum and so it made sense. I don't know if I ever had that realization. I was just kind of rolling with it. Like, OK, this is a lot of fun. Let's play this show and do it.

Hughes: Back up, I missed a part there. In 1986 you and Shelli, your first wife, moved to

Arizona. What was that about? Why Arizona?

Novoselic: I moved to Arizona because I had some friends there. And '86 wasn't a very good year on Grays Harbor.

Hughes: I remember it vividly.

Novoselic: And it seemed like there was all this opportunity in Arizona and Phoenix. But Arizona was a right-to-work state (where unions aren't strong) and the wages were really low. You couldn't get ahead.

Hughes: Not to mention the fact that it's about 101 in the shade.

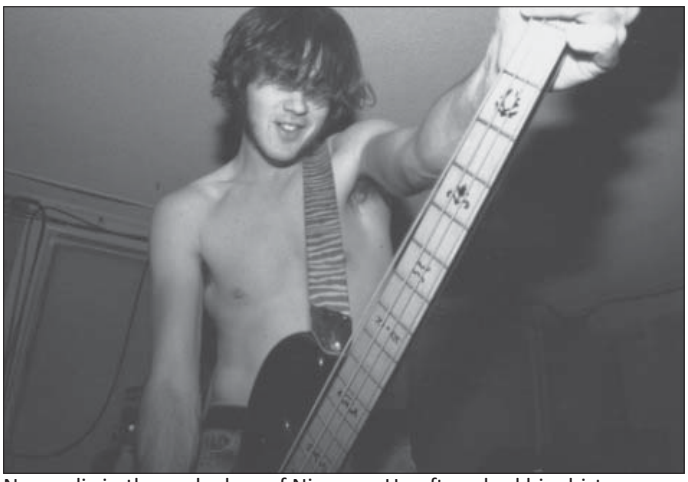
Novoselic: But that was kind of nice. It was dry. I was just looking for opportunity but then there really wasn't an opportunity there to get ahead, so we pretty much moved back to Aberdeen.

Hughes: Hooked up with Kurt immediately?

Novoselic: Hooked up with Kurt again … And it just seemed like there was a better quality of life in Aberdeen, one you could afford to live.

Hughes: Can you tell us about the collaborative process? I'm really interested in that. I know you guys were really hard working. Like you emphasized earlier, "We practiced."

Novoselic: *We practiced.* Typically what happened is Kurt would sock himself away and he'd just write these songs. So he'd have like a riff and a melody. Maybe another part. And then he would bust it out and we would just play it over and over again and try different things. I'd try different bass riffs and suggest something new – that we should do this or do that. He'd suggest something and Chad would have some ideas … Dave would have ideas. So we would just kind of talk about it. And a lot of times it would just kind of flow too.



Novoselic in the early days of Nirvana. He often shed his shirt when they played in stuffy venues, including house parties. Photo courtesy *Seattle Weekly*

Hughes: So it's a cross between a jam session and really developing a particular song?

Novoselic: Right. We'd have jam sessions and tunes would just come out of the jam session.

Hughes: Just be sort of putzing around and all of a sudden somebody would hear a hook and you'd come in on the bass?

Novoselic: Yeah, yeah, or, you know, do a change.

Hughes: So you guys were all pretty talented by-ear musicians, but would you tape this stuff so then you could memorize it and learn it.

Novoselic: Sometimes there would be a boom box or something. But no, because there's really not a lot of tapes of that, so we never really taped it.

Hughes: And you said earlier that you would develop a repertoire of a lot of really good songs. So here are three guys in a band, and we know that a drummer's role is really crucial, but how did you memorize these things from one day to another? A lot of these songs weren't played the same, they were works in progress, is that the way they worked?

Novoselic: Yeah, we'd just memorize them. I was lucky to have a good memory for music. And we'd play a lot, like every day or every other day, and so you'd keep your chops up. And the new riffs or ideas were fresh in our memory. We'd just kick them around. Like the song would come together fast or take a while for it to come together. Some ideas would come to fruition or they would just kind of fizzle out. Or we'd have a song and play it for a while and then just lose interest in it.

Hughes: In Goldberg's book he says that the word "geniuses" is over used, but he said Kurt Cobain in his view was a pure genius. And you said something yesterday about his creativity. Can you tell us about that?

Novoselic: Yes, he was a genius … as far as the way he just made completely original expression. And he transitioned through mediums. It seemed (to happen) very easily. Like if you look at his paintings they're very good. He can do like drawings and sketches.

Hughes: The paintings are typical of the music he was doing.

Novoselic: You can kind of see the same Kurt – just kind of weird, kind of a little bent.

Hughes: Like all that stuff he was collecting too.

Novoselic: He was collecting things, he was just an artist. He was compelled to express

himself. It wasn't any kind of a front or a pose or an identity, like, "Hey, I'm an artist. This is what I do." He just did it, and he did it for his own sake, maybe just to entertain himself. I don't know.

Hughes: You know whole forests have fallen to writing about this issue about why Kurt was the way he was. And you've talked really candidly about the fact that you were a "maladjusted" kid or were working through stuff. So do you think that that his parents' divorce was really the searing event that influenced his creativity?

Novoselic: I don't know. I really don't.

Hughes: Did he talk about that a lot? Was it really palpable … you could see it coming out in these lyrics?

Novoselic: I wouldn't point out any single relationship. I would just say that he had experiences that, how do I put it? He got burned. He just got burned, and he got cynical. And I don't know – "once bitten, twice shy." I'm not blaming anybody or anything. It happens to a lot of people. It's happened to me.

Hughes: Sure, it happened to me too.

Novoselic: You get burned and for whatever reason – intentional, unintentionally – that's just human relationships. He was very insightful, though, and intuitive, and very, really smart. It's an amazing thing about humanity too, like, maybe Kurt was exasperated by humanity itself. Exasperated, that weight of, "Oh, how do I fit in this world?"

Hughes: So this energy that he got from playing on stage, that must have been a real—

Novoselic: He would always kind of like turn around. He'd say something and then he'd contradict himself like moments later, and then he'd catch it a lot of times and just look at me and laugh. So, OK, here it is, he's exasperated with humanity, like, "Oh god, this world just drives me nuts. I don't fit in." But he'd sit and watch television for *hours*! He had the remote control on the VCR and he would just like watch the most ridiculous thing and he would just compile them. And so I go and I look at these tapes and I'm like, "Why did you record Lee Press-On Nails?" Or, just the most kitsch stuff … Maybe he was mocking it. So why did he put all his time into—I don't know maybe he felt better about the world. I don't know why he did it. … He'd watch television for *hours*. …. I watch television for five minutes and I just can't.

Hughes: Someone said it's "chewing gum for the eyes."

Novoselic: I'm just like, "Why should we watch television when we could go drink beer or wine?" Or, I don't know, talk about something, whatever. So I had my own things that I did. I don't know, maybe we were both checking out in our way.

Hughes: So at this legendary first gig outside of Raymond in March of '87 was the band really Nirvana then?

Novoselic: I don't know what we were.

Hughes: People on the Internet who are into all this Nirvana minutiae say the band was called Skid Row.

Novoselic: You know, it was just an excuse to go to a party and get out…

Hughes: On YouTube there's this vignette of that night, like eight minutes. And there's a picture of Krist Novoselic with his shirt off. Is that authentic stuff?

Novoselic: I don't know. I've never seen it.

Hughes: Really? You can do it on YouTube, there it is. It sounds like you in the background. You're saying "Shelli," at one time. It's pretty interesting.

Novoselic: Hahahah.

Hughes: Charlie Cross, (author of *Heavier than Heaven*, a Cobain biography) tells this story about at the end of the first gig you're standing on a VW van urinating on the cars of guests.

Novoselic: No, that never happened.

Hughes: It never happened?

Novoselic: No, things just get *so*, you know, the myth is everything and nobody knows what the reality was.

Hughes: What is the best thing you have ever read about the band and yourself? Is *Heavier Than Heaven* a good book?

Novoselic: You know I don't read Nirvana books. I just don't want to. I went through it already. Why should I go back? I don't watch films, documentaries. I ask people to read them for me … I'll ask, "What do you think?" And glean some things. But why would I want to go back and read all that? I don't know. I only have so much time.

Hughes: That's so Dylanesque.

Novoselic: Is it? Well it's … just practical. It's like, "Why would I want to go back and read that?"

Hughes: You're thinking, "I was there"?

Novoselic: I was there, for better, for worse. I have great memories. I have some not-so-great memories. But that's just life. And again, just being nostalgic … I don't want to go back when I could be doing things on the future, moving forward, trying to make things happen.

Hughes: Do you ever think this classic thing we all ask ourselves "There but for fortune?" What do you think you would be doing at the age of 43 if all this had just been a bust and you never sold any records and never been in Nirvana?

Novoselic: I would probably be living in Western Washington somewhere. And I would own a home and be working on a trade. Somewhere I'd have my trade, which probably would have been painting factories, doing commercial painting or something. And I would be like precinct committee officer or something, or active in the Grange or whatever. … I'd be at the Polish Club for a meeting or the Grange Hall. I would have a job. Because I've had so much success with Nirvana, I don't even need to go to work every day. But I wouldn't have this microscope. I think that that would have been the difference; I wouldn't have been part of this phenomenon.

Hughes: Sometimes when you think back does it seem like it's just amazing – you blink, and "Where did the years go? What the hell happened?"

Novoselic: Everybody does that, I'm sure. Where do the years go? But you've got to have as much fun as possible, as long as you're compelled to do things. And I'm not bitter, and I'm not as cynical as I used to be. I'm just more, I guess, realistic.

Hughes: Talking to you now it's hard to imagine, that even back then, you were cynical. When you hear your voice in some Nirvana outtakes, interviews and stuff, you've never had what sounds like a cynical voice.

Novoselic: Oh, I've been really cynical. … But I'm not cynical any more. I can be skeptical, but it's (too) easy to be cynical. You know why I'm not cynical? Because being cynical is

cool now; it's like the hip thing to do. I'm not going to go on this message board and write something cynical and smartass under a pseudonym. I'm going to go there, put *my* name down, and then write something that hopefully says something. Because it's so easy to be cynical and a smartass. I've been a cynical smartass for too long in my life. I don't want to do it any more. (Chuckles)

Hughes: Well, let's go back and talk about the Melvins … Is it kind of ironic to you that the Melvins should have and could have been as big as Nirvana because they're great musicians and a great sound?

Novoselic: Yeah, I mean you just never know. There's so many bands that should have been big and huge. But I think the Melvins are huge because they're still going; they're making great music. I mean I played with the Melvins a couple years ago, with the Melvins and Big Business. They are doing phenomenal work. They have a phenomenal body of work, and they're just doing it. And I think at the end of the day when you look at rock 'n' roll music and the pantheon of rock 'n' roll, the Melvins are … going to get their due because it's very sophisticated, well crafted, hard rock music. And we all come from somewhere. We come from Black Sabbath or The Who, or we come from punk rock music – Sex Pistols. But in the lineage of rock 'n' roll, the Melvins have a place there because they've added something to it. They've just not regurgitated this idea, or rehashed that idea, because that happens a lot with rock 'n' roll. It's just like you hear it and you know what it is. You're like, "Oh, I know what they're doing." Buzz and Dale have been true artists. They are taking this form and they're making it their own. When you hear the Melvins, it's the Melvins. It may be heavy hard rock music, but they're not ripping off anybody; they're doing their own thing. Now that might not sound good on the radio next to some pop song, or some other regurgitated popular music, but maybe Buzz and Dale, if they want to do that, they should give it a shot.

Hughes: They're so skilled they could.

Novoselic: But I don't know what kind of dancer Buzz is. He's not going to come out there and do these dance pop songs with choreographed moves. I don't think that's going to happen.

Hughes: About eight years ago, Buzz Osborne told Jeff Burlingame, who was then the arts and entertainment editor of *The Daily World*, that "Nirvana changed the shape of music all over the world, and if it wasn't for the Melvins they never would have existed. Remember, no Melvins, no Nirvana."

Novoselic: Ahahahahahaha! And he went like this, "Ah, ah, I can't believe it, ah." (Putting hands over his face, mimicking Osborne)

Hughes: But it's true?

Novoselic: Yes, it's true, I mean absolutely. Absolutely. Buzz gets a lot of credit. I give Buzz tons of credit, and he should get it.

Hughes: A perfect segue to Dave Grohl, Nirvana's drummer when you made it big. Tell us about Dave Grohl and what he brought to that band.

Novoselic: Dave Grohl is a phenomenal drummer, and a phenomenal musician. We just had a good rap going, we played together well.

Hughes: How did Dave get into the act with Nirvana? There are different versions of that story … that he was sort of out of one band and …

Novoselic: Yeah, he was with Scream, this great D.C. punk band. They were on tour in California and their bass player, Skeeter, quit, went back to D.C. They were stuck broke in Los Angeles. … They were living somewhere in like the Valley and they weren't paying the rent and the landlord came and took the front door off the house to just get them out of there.

Hughes: That's subtle.

Novoselic: And, Dave really had nowhere to go, so he just left. He came up here. We started playing together, and the rest is history.

Hughes: So that first time that he sat in was it like, wow!?

Novoselic: It totally made sense, yeah.

Hughes: I mean is it sort of like Ringo joining the Beatles?

Novoselic: Probably, that's when everything came together. It was right. And Dave had a big kick drum. He was a John Bonham fan, Dale Crover fan. See it goes back to the Melvins.

Hughes: It does, doesn't it?

Novoselic: And (we were) a trio. It's the same format. The Melvins were a trio.

Hughes: Not only that, but he's just a really good guy, isn't he? I mean in terms of the chemistry with the band.

Novoselic: Oh absolutely, yeah. He's easy to get along with – fun, talented. Dave's a hard worker.

Hughes: So you get Dave in the band and all of a sudden when you start doing these collaborations the stuff just kicked it up a notch? You've got this amazing, "force of nature" drummer in there?

Novoselic: We just have this drummer who has a lot of energy, a lot of vitality, and that's what drives the band.

Hughes: So, do you stay in touch with Dave?

Novoselic: Oh yes, all the time. I just saw him a few months ago.

Hughes: The popular notion is that right after Kurt's death when you were sorting everything out that the Foo Fighters came into being and you sort of balked at that.

Novoselic: I didn't balk at it at all. No, Dave just went and did his own thing, and I did my thing.

Hughes: So there's yet another place to set the record straight. The notion is that you said to Dave, "I don't want to do that because it's like a second string of Nirvana."

Novoselic: I don't think so. I think everybody was dealing with things. … I was dealing with things in my way. And then Dave put a band together.

Hughes: What do you think of that band – the Foo Fighters?

Novoselic: Those guys are great. I'm a DJ at Coast Community Radio and I play Foo Fighters' songs all the time.

Hughes: Tell us about that. It's Coast Community Radio at Naselle?

Novoselic: It's in Astoria, Oregon. For over five years I've been a DJ there. I play four hours every other Saturday night from eight to midnight.

Hughes: Do you take requests – are you "Wolfman Jack"?

Novoselic: Sometimes I take requests. It's kind of my flow though. You've seen my record collections. It's really eclectic, so it's an eclectic show. … I get into the groove, one thing

follows another. And if I want to change the course of things I'll play some spoken word to break things up.

Hughes: What kind of spoken word?

Novoselic: Like Spiro Agnew, or Monte Python, or Lyndon Johnson, or Richard Nixon, or Vincent Price reading Thomas Jefferson.

Hughes: Wow! What's the call sign of this radio station?

Novoselic: It's 91.1 FM. You can listen to it online. It's coastradio.org.

Hughes: Does the show have a name.

Novoselic: It's "DJ K-No." Like Jennifer Lopez is "J-Lo." Well, I'm K-No because I'm Krist Novoselic.

Hughes: Do people call in and make requests?

Novoselic: Some people do, and they'll say like, "Oh hey Krist, can you play the Rolling Stones' 'It's Only Rock and Roll'?" And I'm like, "Noooooo, but I'll play some Rolling Stones." I like, "It's Only Rock and Roll" but you hear that on classic rock. I go for the deep tracks.

Hughes: "Little Red Rooster," some of that early stuff?

Novoselic: We'll go on the "Exile." We'll play something off of "Black and Blue." "Let it *Bleed*." "Beggars Banquet."

Hughes: Those guys were blues (in the beginning).

Novoselic: They were totally blues. But then came "Satanic Majesties," and then they got psychedelic. Or they'll call and say, "Krist can you play the Rolling Stones?" and I'll play the Flaming Groovies, which is kind of the same thing, you know.

Hughes: Do they ever ask you play your own stuff? Or do you shy away from that?

Novoselic: I never play Nirvana. But I'll play like Sweet 75 or Eyes Adrift. I'll play Foo Fighters.

Hughes: So with all this enormous record collection, every now and then, whimsically … do you play your own records (at home)?

Novoselic: Yeah. Why not?

Hughes: So into your life now comes this pretty amazing textile artist, Darbury Stenderu.

Tell me about meeting her?

Novoselic: Well, Darbury and I were in the same social scene in Seattle, with a group of people. And then we kind of had some life changes, and so we just got together. (laughs) You know what's interesting, though, is that when I was out here in Deep River, I found this Dalmatian dog out in the hills.

Hughes: How ironic is that? A Dalmatian for a Dalmatian.

Novoselic: I was looking to give the dog away, and this woman, Darbury Stenderu, said, "Oh, that's a cute dog." I'm like, "Well, you can have this dog." And then one thing led to another and Darbury and I got together and now the dog came back to Deep River. (laughs) Isn't that amazing? The Salvador Dogg*ie*.

Hughes: Is that the Dalmatian that met me yesterday?

Novoselic: Yes, Salvador Doggie.

So we just kind of do our thing. Darbury does her thing, and I do my thing. We do our thing.

Hughes: And you said she's obsessed with quilting.

Novoselic: Well, she's a textile artist. It's not just quilting. … She's a printmaker. Darbury is an artist, a true artist. She's compelled to do her work, and she's compelled to push the boundaries. If you look at a quilt, or a garment, or whatever, cooking, whatever she does, Darbury is compelled to try something different and experiment, push things.

Hughes: When you met her, was she very familiar with Nirvana, and you as a musician? Or was that just a whole earlier chapter that she didn't pay much attention to?

Novoselic: Well she knew what my past was. But it was just two people who knew each other.

Hughes: I grew up listening to Leadbelly. I heard you and some musicians from Mudhoney cut some Leadbelly tracks.

Novoselic: No it was from the Screaming Trees. It was Mark Lanegan and Mark Pickerel.

Hughes: Are there any of those early influences, classic blues musicians and the like that really rang your bell?

Novoselic: I like B.B. King and things, but I wouldn't call it an influence. I think my

influence was rock and roll music, whether punk rock, or hard rock, or psychedelic rock.

Hughes: Tell us what those early records were you heard that really captured your imagination and made you think, "Wow, I'll try playing some of this stuff."

Novoselic: Everything really captured (my imagination) —Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, the whole gamut of things. Just anything kind of interesting. The Byrds. Anything that is just kind of interesting or trying to do something different, experimenting.

Hughes: In those early tours when you first went out there, is there any one memory that really sticks out for you, that really galvanized the band? When you look back and you think, is there a night where you're leaving the gig and you thought, "We were incredible tonight. This sound really came together"?

Novoselic: You know when you're playing music it's like you're trying to conjure this thing. It's a phenomenon and so sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't. I don't know, everybody gets together, maybe we had a good meal or whatever, or the spirit was there and it all came together. And we make this music, and it's reciprocal with the crowd; the crowd loves it, the band loves it. And so we've got to conjure this phenomenon, we're just making a racket. You know, the dogs and cats hear it and it just sounds like a bunch of noise. Like most dogs don't like drum sets. You know, boom, boom, tsh. But a human being's like, "Wow, what a phenomenal drummer, look at Keith Moon." A dog would run from it. And we're like, "Wow, listen to his intricacies and the way that he's motive and expressive." But there's no guarantee that you're going to conjure that. It's like sometimes magic works and sometimes it doesn't.

Hughes: So in this new stage of your life is that something that you really miss a lot. You think, "Oh god, I'd like to go …"

Novoselic: I was playing with Flipper, I was having a good time, but there were these kinds of issues that I don't really want to go into. Like, there's some realities about what I wanted then and what I want to do. I don't know if I want to play rock clubs from the ground up any more. But like we made the Flipper record, and again it was compelling, we were inspired. This record's going to come out in January of '09. We had the muse, I mean

it wasn't like we were just slogging through things, and it was uninspired and just kind of patching things together. We were compelled. Everybody had their component that they brought into it. You had this fit. Things fit. With Ted Falcon on guitar, Steve DePace on drums, Bruce Loose did all the vocals, vocal phrasing, and the lyrics. It was *compelling.* … It was easy for me because I was working with Flipper. And so I grew up listening to Flipper and I understood it. And then my own experience coming from Flipper, or coming from Nirvana, like I knew what to do. It sure seemed like it.

Hughes: Can you think that with all the interesting things you're doing, the ways you're staying busy, can you see yourself … 10 years from now going back out on the road with a band?

Novoselic: I don't know if I'd go back. It would depend on *how* I would go back on the road. Sure, I don't know. I don't like leaving. I just want to stay home.

Hughes: Charlie Cross says one of the greatest myths in rock history is that Nirvana was an overnight success. In truth the band did nine tours and played together for four years before they became successful.

Novoselic: Absolutely.

Hughes: Grunt work, in the trenches.

Novoselic: It was grunt work. And there was a lot of time where there would be these stories on the "*Seattle scene*," in like 1990 and then they would never mention Nirvana. We were off the radar. Like, "How come you're not mentioning us? What do we do?"

Hughes: You need a press agent.

Novoselic: We need a press agent or something like that.

Hughes: So, it's Sept. 24, 1991 and they released "Nevermind." And then in January it hits number one. What was that like when that happened? You knew you had a hit album on your hands pretty early in the going, right?

Novoselic: We were in Salem, Ore., when we got the news, at the big armory.

Hughes: And what was that like?

Novoselic: Things were coming really fast. … Hey, we have the number one record. And we made it on the local news. I think that night I just went straight home and we made

Kurt Cobain and Krist Novoselic pose in their dressing room backstage at the Paramount Theatre in Seattle after Nirvana's performance on October 25, 1991. Their landmark album "Nevermind" made its debut that week. Photo courtesy Darrell Westmoreland

local Seattle media news, we made number one record. It was a lot of fun. Again things were just happening so fast so it was just part of the whirlwind.

Hughes: When was it, in the wake of that, that you saw any decent money for the first time?

Novoselic: I bought a house. … Yeah, I bought a house in Seattle.

Hughes: By then you had really good management. Danny Goldberg—

Novoselic: Yeah, Danny was there and John Silva. … They were great.

Hughes: You hear so many stories about rock musicians getting ripped off by their management and all that.

Novoselic: No, not at all. Our management was in California but our accountants were in Bellevue. And so we had that separation there. … It was really good. But that's what Danny and John insisted on, "We don't touch your money." And that way nobody can complain. I still work with the same accountants today.

Hughes: The same people in Bellevue?

Novoselic: Yep.

Hughes: And it's been clear and understandable accounting?

Novoselic: It was Lee Johnson with Voldal Wartelle. Ann and Nancy Wilson of Heart had their ups and downs. And it was during their comeback in the '80s they worked with Lee and Voldal Wartelle, and that man is sharp. They got their music and careers together, and Lee got their finances together, he knows the music industry. And it was through Susan Silver, who was managing Soundgarden at the time, and she recommended Lee.

Hughes: What a happy development because you've been on the front line (of music), and you've heard all those stories about everything going wrong, and people getting screwed.

Novoselic: See that's the thing. If you have that separation – not that Gold Mountain would have done anything wrong. They did things the right way and that's a judge of character right there. They said, "We're not going to handle your finances. We don't do that. We manage the band."

Hughes: Do you have any idea how many copies "Nevermind" has sold?

Novoselic: I think like fourteen million or something like that. Eleven, fourteen … oh what's a few…

Hughes: What's a few million here and there?

Novoselic: But who knows how many have been downloaded. (laughs).

Hughes: Now tell us about the "Unplugged" concert. Was that a really neat experience? Like Kurt's grandfather, Leland Cobain, said recently, there's a lot of us who really heard the lyrics clearly for the first time.

Novoselic: Well, we pulled it off. It all came together towards the end. In those last rehearsals it came together. I remember playing with Kurt and Chris Kirkwood in the hotel room and just going over the songs.

Hughes: It's mesmerizing music.

Novoselic: We pulled it off.

Hughes: The accordion on there … was that something sort of impromptu that you brought to the concert?

Novoselic: Yeah impromptu, just kind of trying to mix things up a little bit.

Hughes: Did you guys have some anxieties that you'd be able to pull that off?

Novoselic: Absolutely, oh yeah. I think one of my best memories is how happy Kurt was afterwards, that we pulled it off. Relief.

Hughes: Were you seeing signs … that Kurt was in emotional and physical distress?

Novoselic: I think that it was more general, like with each individual dealing with all the fame and the stress. And then there were personal things and issues, and it all came together for better or for worse. I'm sure that I showed signs of stress and physical things too.

Hughes: What was the worst part of that, the hardest part of the fame quotient? Was it

having to tour, or people intruding on your lives?

Novoselic: I think it's just the transition. It's kind of a shocker. You become famous and you need to get used to that, getting recognized, or the scrutiny and the attention, when you were anonymous. And then all of a sudden you're this celebrity. It took me a long time to get used to the idea, even years after Nirvana ended. So I had the luxury of time where I could adapt in my own (way).

Hughes: So back then were you reading stuff about the band – you don't read it now, but you read it then – and it really pissed you off, and you think "This is just rubbish!" Was that part of the equation?

Novoselic: Yeah, they're just all opinions. … It's all opinions.

Hughes: So things were spiraling down. Were you really concerned about Kurt and the travails that he was having? And saying to yourself, "God, I've got to call him up and say, 'Look man, what can I do to help you? We need you'"?

Novoselic: Let me think how I want to phrase this. I made my feelings known very early on. And I was outspoken about a few things, and if that was advice, or if it was, it wasn't heeded. And in a lot of ways I was saying things that weren't very welcome, so that strained things with the relationship.

Hughes: Did you back off and say …

Novoselic: I couldn't just say it over and over again. When you deal with those issues people have to make their own realizations, hit rock bottom or whatever. Then they're going to turn things around. Well, obviously that didn't happen. That rock bottom didn't happen. It's up to the individual. It was really powerful. I think it's a potent cocktail just this fame, personal issues, personal histories. There was just a lot going on. And then it was all distorted, of being so medicated or so, just being on a lot of drugs. And so catastrophe happened.

Hughes: All of us when we lose somebody we're real close to like that … did you beat yourself up after that and think, "What could I have done?"

Novoselic: There's anger. There's regrets … I was angry. It's just a waste. You know it was the f***ing drugs. It's pretty bad. All in 20-20 hindsight, you know. Kurt called me the

first time he did heroin and he told me he did it. And I told him, "Don't do it man. You're playing with dynamite." And it was like, Will Shatter, who was the bass player for Flipper, he OD'd and died around that time. Andrew Wood *died* from heroin. There was this person, peer, fellow Olympian, he died. He OD'd on heroin. I've never seen heroin, but I've seen people on it. And people fool themselves with all kinds of things – gambling, sex, denial, all kinds of things to get hung up on. There's a whole romance about heroin.

Hughes: It's a "jazz" drug.

Novoselic: Jazz drug. Then you're inclined for medication. I can see how it was attractive. You know, people medicating themselves …. And then there's this whole whirlwind.

Hughes: About that stomach ailment that he was cursed with?

Novoselic: It was weird. It was real, I mean it was real. I remember he would throw up so much he couldn't throw up any more. I took him to doctors, specialists.

Hughes: You would think that some of those specialists could have hit on something.

Novoselic: I don't know *what* it was. I don't know what, that's a mystery. You'd think they'd find something. I think it was just the crap food. Here's the deal, like, we don't have a lot of money, OK. So we go to like AM/PM, in Olympia. Right behind the lottery office there was an AM/PM there. And it was like, OK at least I got a hot dog. We're hungry, right. He gets a f***ing ice-cream cone. And I'm like, "No wonder you stomach hurts. Why are you eating ice cream?" And then he looks at me and gets all pissed off, like I'm telling him what to do. But I'm the dude who drove him to the frickin' hospital, or hanging out with him while he's puking his guts, and trying to help him. So it's just like, you know, "Oh, don't do heroin." And I'd get the same look. You know what I mean? So where the heck am I going to go? What am I going to do? What can I say? "You eat this greasy hot dog instead of the ice cream cone."

Hughes: Dave coming into the band later and (having a) different personality, did he try to make headway too?

Novoselic: You've got to ask Dave that. I mean sure, I don't know. I think there was a different dynamic between Kurt and I than there was between Dave and Kurt.

Hughes: So you wake up one day and you find out that … your friend is dead.

Novoselic: Well it's shocking when you think about what he did and how he did it. It's totally shocking. But then you kind of look back, and you know it's like — I told this to Charlie Cross – Ivan Denisovich, the Solzhenitsyn dude. He's in a camp in Siberia. Ivan Denisovich and a day in his life. He's in this friggin' gulag.

Hughes: Eating fish heads.

Novoselic: And then the day starts out, and he builds this brick wall, and he totally gets into building this wall, and that's his day. He puts some energy into the work, and he's into building this wall. It's pretty meager but it's just like he found some meaning in life. Who knows what the Solzhenitsyn symbolism of the wall is, the psychological (warfare) years. I don't know. But that's what I saw in it: This dude is finding some meaning in his life. And then Ivan Denisovich is in this camp and there's other people in the camp – this was in the early '50s – people who the Russians picked up in the German concentration camps. So there's these Russians in a German concentration camp and then they get put on a train and sent to Siberian gulag. Like, what a bad deal, right? So I'm reading this book in the tour van, and I tell that to Kurt. And he's like, "Ah, and they still want to live?" He was disgusted. And I'm like, "OK, whatever, Mr. Negative." You know what I mean?

Hughes: I do.

Novoselic: And it's like, OK, so how bad was your life? You had people who are alive today, they were in Auschwitz or wherever, and they survived that. They were starved, they were raped, they were beaten. Their loved ones and friends were murdered before their eyes. That's a pretty bad existence. But then they survived, and they got out of the concentration camp, and they have the tattoo on their arm, the number. But they build lives for themselves. They got out, they survived. They're still alive today, and they've had productive, meaningful lives. Well, did Kurt really have it that bad? So it kind of tells you what was going on. (Thought processes) distorted from heroin, drug distorted, I don't know. And then the gulag analogy. It's just personality or something.

Hughes: I think that's really brilliantly put, Krist.

Novoselic: Thank you.

Hughes: So afterwards, and for the next year after Kurt's death, what did you do? Did you

just sort of sort things out?

Novoselic: What I did was I put another band together, Sweet 75 – another dysfunctional band.

Hughes: Why was it dysfunctional?

Novoselic: It was a dysfunctional relationship. Four bands, and four dysfunctional kind of deals.

Hughes: But that first band you were ever with did OK, didn't it?

Novoselic: We did OK, but it was dysfunctional. I don't want to be dysfunctional any more so I'm proactive.

And then I got involved in local politics. And so, instead of just thrusting myself into music, I did music and politics. And I kind of just did whatever I wanted to do. And I did music, and I did politics, and I worked on my farmhouse. And then I got a pilot's license and I fly a plane.

Hughes: Is that cool?

Novoselic: I love it.

Hughes: What is it about, is it all the classic things?

Novoselic: Yeah, it's science; it's adventure; it's challenging; it's a practical way of transportation.

Hughes: And you're up there.

Novoselic: Yeah, you're up there and you got to deal with it. It's a challenge. So I do that. And then I made a record with Jello Biafra, Kim Thayil and Gina Mainwal, the "No WTO Combo." I did Sweet 75 record, and I did some more Sweet 75 music after that record that was never released, that I thought was pretty good. I played with Curt Kirkwood and Bud Gaugh. We did Eyes Adrift. I made a record with Flipper. So I'm still doing music. After that experience with the whole Nirvana thing I've just been doing what I want to do. I have the luxury to do it, so I just do it.

Hughes: Are you on good terms with Courtney Love now. (Kurt Cobain's widow) Is that a good thing?

Novoselic: Yeah, it's a good thing. It's not bad terms. (laughs)

Hughes: There's got to be a lot of Nirvana stuff in the can that could be released.

Novoselic: I don't think so. What there is is video. There's a lot of video. There's not going to be any new Nirvana records. "You Know You're Right" was a big surprise with people. I had that master tape stashed and I didn't tell anybody. And it didn't come out until – when was it, 2000, 2001? – or whatever.

Hughes: You called me the other day and were talking about journalists leaving for other areas of work and the issues like the Internet and protecting intellectual property. Young Sulzberger, the publisher of the *New York Times*, said, "I feel we are raising a whole generation of readers to expect quality information for free." And you immediately said, that's like people ripping off artists (by just downloading music) and where do you get the money to make records and put tires on the van?

Novoselic: It's a real concern, yeah. So I guess you play live shows and you just got to work harder. Yeah, it's a real concern, people expect it (music for free). I think that whole thing is just going to have to be a combination of a regulatory structure and technology, that they're going to have ways of regulating it.

Hughes: Well is there a question you wish I had been smart enough to ask that you wanted to answer?

Novoselic: No. It's all good. It's 3 o'clock. School's out.

Hughes: I want to thank you.

Novoselic: Thank you.

Hughes: It was enormous fun, I tell you.

End of Interview

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