



Station 1 - Health and Poverty

Link Wray: "I'm half Shawnee Indian, born to a Shawnee mother. I had a Shawnee dad, and he was in the First World War. . .and he was shell-shocked. . . I had to go to work when I was 10 years old to help feed the family."

Sherry Wray: "My grandmother was Shawnee. She was crippled at 11. There were kids who teased her. . .when one of the girls put her knee in Lilly's back, it broke her back. The indians were the ones who build a brace out of buckskin and bone for her, so when she stood her body could be supported."

Link Wray: "My daddy was a war hero, but he was like a casualty, ya know, he couldn't go out and work and everything. So we were very very very poor in North Carolina until he went to work in the Navy Yard Portsmouth, Virginia."



Link Wray's Recording Shack

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"We were born in a little hut - no floors in our house, just dirt, no electricity, just kerosene lamps and candles"

"I went days and days and days in North Carolina without food. No shoes. I mean, my mother would go to bed crying, ya know, praying 'please help us with food.' There were plenty of times when I went to bed hungry. No food at all. I'd go to school and when the kids went to the place to eat, you know, I had to go outside and sit in the swing 'til lunchtime was over cause I didn't have no food to eat. This one little girl in the school, she was totally in love with me, she'd come out and gave me a peanut butter sandwich she had, that her mom and dad gave her. She would divide her peanut butter sandwiches with me. "

Beth Wray Webb: "They struggled; they were very poor and I'm sure he probably fished in the pond to try to get food because, you know, times were really rough."

Link Wray: "After they cured the pneumonia [I got serving in the Korean War] I started hemorrhaging right away. Every time I breathed, I breathed out blood. They had five doctors operating on me for eight hours, took my left lung. . . After they sewed me back up and I recovered from the surgery the doctors said, 'now you're gonna have to sit on the couch the rest of your life.' And I said, 'Well there's a mightier power than you that's gonna tell me I can't go out and play my music.'



“I couldn’t do the Elvis, I couldn’t do the Jerry Lee Lewis, I couldn’t do the Chuck Berry and the Little Richard. I couldn’t do all that stuff, even though I wanted to. If I’d had two lungs and I was healthy, man, I would have been boppin’ along with the rest of them, and there would have been no “Rumble,” ya know. And so I just poured all my heart and my soul into my guitar and searchin’ for sounds. So like I said I punched holes in my speakers to get the distortion with “Rumble” and I bought an old off-brand guitar for 60 dollars at it was in a guitar magazine. I hooked up outdoor speakers to my amplifiers to get a weird sound.”

“From watchin’ my Momma sell butter door to door for five cents a stick, and seein’ my daddy standin’ in the corner shakin,’ his hair and teeth all fallin’ out and nobody givin’ a s*** about it. That’s where the pain in my music comes from”