

The BARN DANCE Opera Country Music Journal

Vol. 2 1994

Spring Edition

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Ontario Agricultural Societies Still Supporting Country Music

More than one thousand delegates representing more than 160 Exhibitions in the Province of Ontario gathered in the main Ball Room of the Royal York Hotel, ion Toronto Wednesday February 16, 1994.

They were there to attend their annual meeting and convention. They were also there to select live entertainment from this year's Entertainment Showcase for a main attraction at this year's Fair or Exhibitions.

Turning back the pages of time, to the late forties and fifties . it was the late W.T. "Doc" Cruickshank who introduced "Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance", at these very same events in Toronto' Royal York Hotel. Doc knew then, the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies were dedicated to our Canadian Country Music. Now, almost fifty years later, it is still the same story.

Gordie Tapp, who once starred on the Wingham Barn Dance opened and presented this year's show at the Royal York. His sidekick Cousin Clem of Hee Haw fame was there too, the good Brothers, Karl Kees Golden Fiddle Music, singer Lisa Brokop, Prescott Brown and the popular Ronnie Prophet. It was Anne Dirven's presentation of "Take Mee Dancin'" by the Bruce County Cloggers of Mildmay that set everyone's toes a-tappin' for other acts to follow.

"Gordie Tapp and Earl Heywood, together again."

Before the final act, Gordie Tapp introduced his long time friend "Canada's Singin' Cowboy, Earl Heywood. The audience soon learned from their conversation Gordie and Earl had performed at dozens of fairs in past decades.

Gordie then went on to give Earl the honour of introducing one of the hottest new Canadian Country groups soon to be heard on recordings, "The Desert Dolphins."

Members of this group include Peter Padalino, Rocky Howell, Jamie Todd and Grant Heywood, they were once known as Major Hooples Boarding House and have recently switched to a more country sound.

Their repertoire of the greatest hot songs of country Music, singing 3 and 4 part harmony, accompanied by the sounds of twangy guitars, fiddle, mandolin, and drums obviously charmed the delegates. Before the band could pack up their equipment seven Fairs had booked them for their 1994 events. Currently "The Desert Dolphins" are appearing at the "Rockin' Horse Ranch" in Cambridge and "Stampede Corral" in Kitchener, under the management of Bill Gefross. American Grandstand Productions Inc.

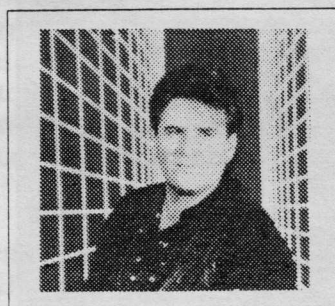
The DESERT DOLPHINS



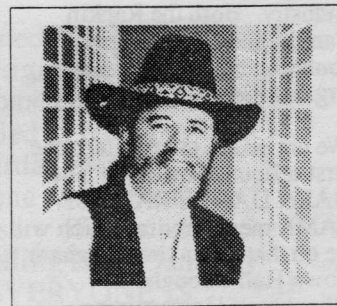
Jamie Todd



Grant Heywood



Peter Padalino



Rocky Howell

The Barn Dance Opera Country Music Journal

Wingham BARN DANCE Hall of Fame Historical Foundation

a non-profit organization
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Giant Fundraiser to help Hospital and Barn Dance

Thanks to Russell Kirkpatrick, wizard of the Harmonica who once appeared in a harmonica contest in Palmerston some years ago. Russell who hails from the Markdale area came up with the idea of a Giant Fundraiser for the Markdale Hospital and the Wingham Barn Dance Hall of Fame.

Together with Delane Merrifield they have united many entertainers and organized an all day event scheduled to take place in the Rocklyn Community Centre north of Markdale, on Saturday May 21st, with a dance in the evening.

A host of well known entertainers will be supporting this giant fund raiser, including Ernie King, Clare Adlum, Hughie Elder, Earl and Martha

Heywood, all former well known celebrities of CKNX Radio and Television, as well as a host of popular local groups including The Madill's, The Hallmans, The Weatherall's, Music Makin' Moms, Clive Prentice, Bonnie Madill, The Prenticeville Square Dancers, Clong Dancers and Much More.

The funds raised from this event will be equally distributed to the Markdale Hospital and the Wingham Barn Dance Hall of Fame Historical Foundation. On behalf of the Markdale Hospital the Foundation, and The Barn Dance Opera Journal, we wish to thank all the entertainers for donating their talent and support, and special thanks to Russell Kirkpatrick and Delane Merrifield for this great undertaking, truly a wonderful deed to mankind.

...from the President... Hello Folks:

Welcome to the BARN DANCE OPERA COUNTRY MUSIC JOURNAL. Many of us were recently saddened to learn of the passing of Mel Lavigne, one of our most prominent pioneers of Canadian Country Music. On behalf of the Directors and Founding Members of this Association may we extend our deepest sympathy to the Lavigne family.

On a happier note may we congratulate the Rankin Family for winning the highest recognition for their songs and record sales within the shortest period of time known in the history of the Canadian Music Industry. Both the Rankin Family and Mel Lavigne are founding members of this organization.

We are proud to announce the first official showing of The BARN DANCE HALL OF FAME memorabilia, which will be on display in the Wingham Town Hall throughout Wingham's Homecoming Celebration June 29 to July 3, 1994.

What was to have been a summer picnic for members of our BARN DANCE FRIENDSHIP CLUB, will now become a Special BARN DANCE RALLY taking place in the Royal Canadian Legion, Wingham, Sunday September 18 at 1:00 p.m. (More details to follow in the next Journal.)

Until then always keep in mind
THE SHOW MUST GO ON.

Earl Heywood
President
Barn Dance Hall of Fame
Historical Foundation

YES!!
I want to join
the Wingham Barn Dance
Hall of Fame Historical
Foundation Friendship Club
and receive the Barn Dance
Opera Country Music
Journal. Enclosed is my
cheque/money order for
\$20.00 to start my
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RANKIN FAMILY Support the Hall of Fame Project

The Board of Directors of The Wingham Barn Dance Hall of Fame Historical Foundation, are extremely proud to have the RANKIN FAMILY as founding members of our organization.

The Rankin Family were first honoured as the Canadian Country Music Association's Group of the Year and VISTA Rising Stars Award, according to a headline announcement courtesy of the Halifax Mail Star, Sept. 18, 1993.

This versatile talented group of 5 Canadian performers residing in Mabou, Cape Breton surprised the recording industry, and won the hearts of the Canadian record buying public last year with their Gaelic and traditional sound on EMI Records. Unbelievable as it may sound, on September 3, 1993 when the Rankin Family's "North Country" recording was released, ten days later sales had soared to 100,000.

By September 17, Miramax/Disney Films released the Rankin Family to the world. Their song "Fare Thee Well Love" was selected as part of the sound track for the anticipated blockbuster movie "Into The West" Produced and shot in Ireland.

After scoring a Platinum record in ten days the Rankins took to the road and toured 16 major cities throughout Ontario. Their last performances were November 1st and November 3 in Kitchener and Owen Sound respectively.

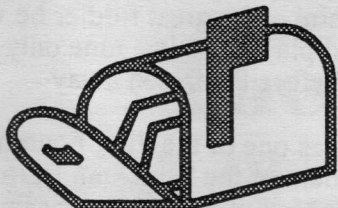
This year at the Juno Awards they walked off with four Junos to their credit. May we wish them continued success. For more information on the Rankin Family, address your letter to the Rankin Family Quarterly, c/o Fan Club, Kaye Rankin, P.O. Box 43, Mabou, Nova Scotia, Canada B0E 1X0.

FORMOSA Ontario Loves The ORIGINAL BARN DANCE

If anyone were to tell you that the Original BARN DANCE founded by the late "Doc" Cruickshank in 1937 has had it's day, they are dead wrong. Many still remember the last live radio broadcast of the popular show from the Formosa Community Hall way back in October 1963, the date was the 26th.

The fact still remains the Ole Original BARN DANCE continues to flourish, remaining as popular as ever throughout western Ontario. It is still available too, with members of the original cast and a new generation of seasoned performers quite capable of delivering the kind of music Mcee Johnny Brent so often earmarked "From Coast to Coast...the music People love most, Time for another Saturday Night Barn Dance."

It was four years after the last live radio broadcast when ten Barn Dance shows were staged in various communities in honour of Canada's 100th birthday.



**Drop us a
LINE.**

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Ontario
N0G2W0**

Eight years later the Town of Listowel come forth to host the first of a series of Barn Dance Reunions. These were organized and produced by Johnny Brent, Ernie King and Earl Heywood. Some of these shows drew crowds beyond the capacity of the Community Centres. After a spell, another series of what was known as Barn Dance Road Shows in the mid Eighties were produced by Gerry Chomyn and Richard Knechtel.

"From Coast to Coast... the Music people love Most... Time for Another Saturday Night BARN DANCE."

In order to preserve the history of the Internationally known show, in 1989 the Wingham Barn Dance Hall of Fame Historical Foundation was founded and registered with the Ontario Government, to make the Original Barn Dance a Historical Institution of it's own.

An Organization that embodies sixteen members on a Board of Directors, a large cast of Original Barn Dance Performers, including

several hundred founding members of the Barn Dance Hall of Fame and it is still growing.

In 1990 the new organization staged a series of Original Barn Dance shows, at the Tillsonburg and Owen Sound Fall Fairs. August of 1991, the Directors of the Formosa Old Boys & Girls Reunion chose to stage the Original Barn Dance. It was the first time in it's history it was ever held in a huge tent.

Earl Spitzig of the Formosa Community Hall Board recognized the tremendous impact of the Barn Dance Memorabilia Show at the International Plowing Match in September of 1993. He and his group were eager to help support the Barn Dance Hall of Fame by presenting the Barn Dance in Formosa Saturday April 30, 1994. They wanted the original performers who had played in Formosa in the early fifties every Tuesday night. Artists like Accordionist Bill Mankiss, Steel Guitarist Lloyd Bank, Singers Ernie King, Earl & Martha Heywood, Lynn Russworm, Lorne Ritchie, Drummer Paul Hutton, and Mike Slauenwhite who pinch hit on the fiddle for Vic Pasowisti.

The event turned out to be such a success the Original Barn Dance will now become an annual event, and is scheduled to return to Formosa Saturday October 29, 1994. This time to celebrate the 57th Anniversary of "Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance." As Always, EVERYONE IS WELCOME.

Canada's First Fiddle Champion Performs to the End

Mel Lavigne,

Champion of Canada's first National Old Time Fiddle Contest, passed away Thursday February 10 at Huronia District Hospital in Midland, Ontario in his 77th year.

The funeral mass was held at St. Mary's Church in Victoria Harbour, Monday February 14th at 11:00 a.m. Final resting place, St. Margaret's Cemetery, Midland Ontario. He is survived by his wife May, Daughters Faye, Gail and Janice, several grand children and great grand children. Graham and Eleanor Townsend also fiddle champions paid their last respects by playing "How Great Thou Art" and "Beyond The Sunset," accompanied by the organist and church choir.

Mel was a multi talented musician who also mastered the piano and saxophone. During World War II he joined the Canadian Army Show and played a Command Performance for Wilhelmina, Queen of the Netherlands. In 1950 he became a regular of the Legendary Original CKNX Barn Dance, in Wingham Ontario, and a member of Earl Heywood's Serenade Ranch Gang.

In 1951 and 1952 he became the First Old Time Fiddler to win the Canadian Open Championship at the International Old Time Fiddle Contest held in Shelburne, Ontario. Soon after, he formed his own band, The Bluewater Boys, and produced a series of weekly television shows on CKVR-TV in Barrie, Ontario, guested on the CBC Network, and



Mel Lavigne - Shelburne Fiddle Contest 1951

*"The great fiddler he was, he
played his last tune only an hour
before he passed away."*

Walter Ostenek's Polka Time show on CFTO-TV in Kitchener.

Mel Lavigne made his first and only recordings as a tribute to the 40th Anniversary of the International Fiddle Contest at Shelburne, Ontario. Included in this collection is the "Dawn Waltz" and "The Great Eastern Reel" that won him the championship. When Mel and his wife, May moved to Honey Harbour, they also developed a Marina and a Dance Hall later retiring in Victoria Harbour.

During Mel's last hours in the Hospital, old time fiddle friends dropped by to play fiddle tunes with him. The great fiddler he was, he had played his last tune only an hour before he passed away.

Mel was one of the First Founding Members of the Wingham Barn Dance Hall of Fame Historical Foundation. His memorabilia is to become an everlasting memorial in the BARN DANCE HALL OF FAME, in remembrance of the late MEL LAVIGNE - CANADA'S FIRST OLD TIME FIDDLE CHAMPION.