

The Barn Dance Opera Country Music Journal

Vol. 15 1997

Fall Edition

Price \$3.95

1997 Barn Dance Season a Big Success!!!

Our 1997 season of **Barn Dances**, with performances in Listowel, Lucknow, St. Clements, Brussels, Blyth and Stratford, wrapped up with a great show at Stratford's Fairgrounds Coliseum on September 13th, with over 1,000 people in attendance. Featured on this show were all the regulars, plus the Mercey Brothers, Terry Sumsion, Hank Bedard and Katy Roth, 11 year old singing sensation from Tavistock.

The **Blyth Barn Dance**, back on August 31st, was a bit different. First, it was a Sunday rather than a Saturday night Barn Dance, but also for this show some of the actors from the Blyth Festival production of Barn Dance Live! joined us on stage to perform along with the people they were portraying in the theatre. We had two Earl Heywoods, two Larry Merceys, two Ernie Kings, and two John Brents!! Gary Muir also did a great job as the late Cactus Mac and as the late Clarke Johnston. Great stuff!!

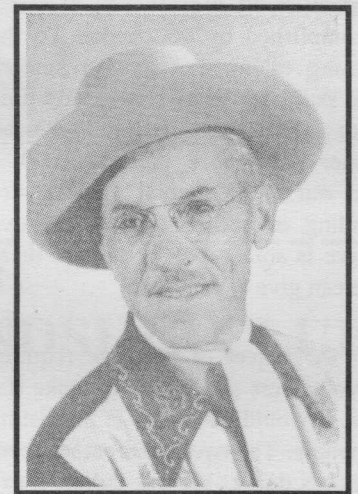
At the **Blyth Barn Dance** we did tributes to Cactus and Clarke, and at the Stratford show to Al Cherney. We

presented Pioneer Awards to the families of these performers, who were certainly among the most popular acts in the history of the Barn Dance.

We're looking forward to more **Barn Dances** next season; we've had a number of inquiries, and expect to do six or eight shows in 1998. We'll keep you posted!!



CLARKE JOHNSTON



CACTUS MAC



AL CHERNEY

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Calendars -	\$10.00 each
Barn Dance Cassette -	\$10.00 each
Barn Dance CD's -	\$19.00 each

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(519) 357-3021)*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

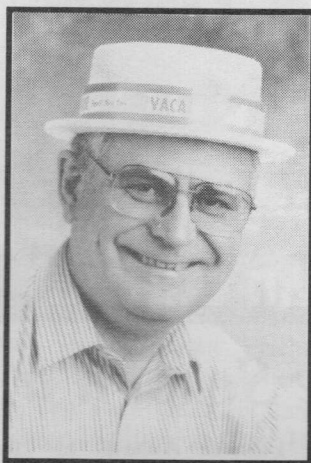
Hello everyone!!

"Wow, what a summer!" The Barn Dance Historical Society's CKNX Barn Dances were a tremendous success; way beyond everyone's expectations. This was due, of course, to you the "fans", turning out in fantastic numbers. On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you from the bottom of our hearts, hope you thoroughly enjoyed yourselves, and will come back next year. We promise you more of the same. We have had many requests for 1998 Barn Dances, and hope to accommodate at least another six to eight.

The magnitude of the show and dance does create a great deal of work, all accomplished by volunteers. To the performing talent, I extend a sincere "Thank You". Much hard work and time was put in by these people, with no performer paid more than \$100.00. I thought our local special guests were outstanding, and this only goes to prove that there is some great talent out there that we can give exposure to.

A project of this size requires many volunteers and others to make it a success. I would be remiss in not listing these people. The twelve Directors spent many hours doing various duties. Larry Mercey was our Musical Director and spent hours getting the talent together, practicing and drawing up the shows. Larry's wife, June, helped at the merchandise table. Lynn Russwurm, along with a lot of encouragement and hard work by his wife Shirley, helped put the Souvenir Program together, produced the Saturday Night Barn Dance CD's and tapes you were able to purchase, helped put the Calendar together, and Shirley was a tireless worker at all facets of selling our merchandise, and any other duties that needed to be done. The Pioneer Awards were put together by Ernie King, Dave Wallace and Ron Coulthard, and were ably presented by Earl Heywood. Lois Schistad, our treasurer, had her hands full, not only with money, but getting individual sponsors for each show, keeping a scrap

by Len Love



book, and paying all the bills. Hughie Elder was our stage manager, and wife Beth was a real salesperson at our merchandise table.

Of course, what would a Barn Dance be without Johnny Brent? He did his usual professional job of introductions and keeping the show moving. Unfortunately, Johnny announced his retirement at the last Barn Dance in Stratford. He will be hard to replace!

Wayne Otterbein and wife Judy ably looked after the programs at each and every Barn Dance. June Therrien, our membership chairperson, was at every Barn Dance, selling merchandise and organizing our merchandise table. Betty Dale also worked at the merchandise table and controlled admission for Barn Dance personnel.

A big "Thank You" to KIX Video Productions, and Wayne Greve Productions for the sound and lights. Both did a great job. Thanks to the organizations who hired us. They did a great job of organizing, advertising, and making things run smoothly. Also thanks to the sponsors, and program sponsors for helping make everything a success. A special "Thank You" to AM 920 CKNX for their support and cooperation in producing the Barn Dance. Thanks to everyone for helping put the CKNX Barn Dance back on the Road!

**The Barn Dance
Historical Society**
P.O. Box 68
Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0
Phone (519) 357-3021

Founder:

Founder, Honorary President, Advisor
Earl Heywood

Board of Directors 1997:

President: Leonard Love
1st Vice-President: Larry Mercey
2nd Vice-President: Dave Wallace

Directors:

Ron Coulthard, Betty Dale, Hugh Elder,
Earl Heywood, Carl Kuhn, Wayne
Otterbein, Lynn Russwurm, Lois Schistad,
June Therrien

NOTICES

The terms of four members of our Board of Directors will end in April 1998. Replacements for these people will be elected at our Annual Meeting on April 5th. We are looking for members who have a genuine interest in the activities and the short and long term success of our organization. If you are interested and feel that you can contribute to the activities of our Board of Directors, please make your interest known to our Nominating Committee, and have a member to nominate you and another to second the nomination. Communications with the Committee should be done by mail at least thirty days prior to our Annual Meeting.

Just a reminder to all members that memberships are based on the calendar year, and are due as of January 1st, 1998. Thanks to everyone for your support!

June Therrien,
Membership Director

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THE EDITOR'S REPORT

by Ron Coulthard

In spite of our best efforts, for various reasons it seems to be difficult for us to get our newsletters to you as soon as we should. We'll try our best to get up to speed, beginning with the winter issue!!

On October 26th, we had our planning meeting for 1998, and it was suggested that we try to get some correspondents in various outlying centres where our members live. I think this is a great idea; it will help us to broaden our coverage of the country music scene. If you have some news from your area that might interest our membership, we'd love to get it - (address and phone number is The Barn Dance Historical Society, P. O. Box 68, Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0, (519) 357-3021), or my home phone is (519) 284-3255, or call Earl Heywood at (519) 357-2355, if you have something for his News, Note's Events section.

Now that the Barn Dance season is over for this year, we want to devote some of our time and resources to our Museum. We're considering some new ideas, such as a more accessible location, or possibly a travelling display. In the meantime, if you'd like to visit our present museum - well worth seeing - just phone us at (519) 357-3021, to arrange a time.

In this issue we're including and application form for our Barn Dance Friendship Club. If you know anyone who might like to be a member, please pass this form along to them. Also a membership might make a great Christmas gift for that country music fan on your list. Don't forget, we also have Barn Dance Tapes and CD's, as well as mugs, pictures, etc., just call (519) 357-3021 for a complete list.

Bye for now!

NEWS, NOTES 'N EVENTS

Saturday night, September 13th, 1997 was the first time for Terry Sumsion to step into the spotlight on "Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance". More than one thousand Barn Dance Fans came out to cheer Terry on the show singing his hit recording "Loving Place". The event was presented in the Coliseum in Stratford by the Perth Cattle Breeders Association.

The Tillotson Sisters, Dollie and Lois, faithful members of the Barn Dance Historical Society, just recorded a collection of songs that takes them back to the era when they starred on the original Newberry Barn Dance broadcast over CFCO radio in Chatham, Ontario. If you like those grand old songs of the 30's and 40's, like Sweet Evalina, Maple on the Hill, etc., you'll enjoy their sweet harmony in song. For details, phone Dollie. Wilson, R. R. #3, Langton, Ontario N0E 1G0, at (519) 875-2255.

(Continued on page 6)

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FROM THE STAGE

My name is Wayne Otterbein, and I am the Show Manager of the CKNX Barn Dance for 1998. I would like to keep our membership informed of the progress of our 1998 show season.

First, I would like to thank Len Love for his excellent managing of the 1997 season. I would also like to thank Len for offering his expertise and guiding me in my new position. I am now deep in phone calls and meetings to book the Barn Dance for the spring, summer and fall of 1998. The Barn Dance is sure in demand!!

Keep your eyes open for future articles on what's happening From the Stage. I would like the members to write me about the likes and dislikes of the Barn Dance shows last summer, and who you might like to see on future shows. Send your letters in care of Wayne Otterbein, Box 2106, Bayfield, Ontario N0M 1G0.

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Otterbein, Lynn Russwurm, Lois Schistad,
June Therrien

You can *HELP* by joining

The Barn Dance Historical Society's BARN DANCE FRIENDSHIP CLUB

Membership is only \$20.00 per year
(many members have chosen to purchase 2 to 5 year memberships).

As a member you will receive:

- A personalized FRIENDSHIP CLUB CERTIFICATE.
- A one year subscription to our quarterly JOURNAL keeping you informed of and providing some enjoyable reading.
- A special invitation to our Barn Dance get togethers, at least once per year.
- The right to VOTE on items concerning the running and structuring of the Foundation.
- The opportunity to PARTICIPATE by sitting on one of our Committees or to serve on the Board of Directors.
- Advance notice of SPECIAL EVENTS.
- The right to PERFORM during our Hoedowns. Members only - registration on a first come basis.



YES, I want to become a member of the

BARN DANCE FRIENDSHIP CLUB

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone No. _____ Date: _____

\$20.00
1 Year

\$40.00
2 Years

\$60.00
3 Years

\$80.00
4 Years

\$100.00
5 Years

Are you an entertainer? YES NO

If so, details please: _____

Are you interested in sitting on one of our committees? YES NO

If "yes", area of interest: _____

THE COUNTRY VERSATILES

Len Love, Wayne Riehl, Gerald Davidson - that's the backbone of The Country Versatiles and has been for almost 30 years. In the 60's when Wayne and Len were performing at the Royal Hotel in Mitchell, along with Earl Fries they decided to form a trio and work as a unit. Earl left the group shortly, to go on the road with his own band, The Chaparrals and that's when Gerald Davidson stepped into the vocal spot. All three had been working with CKNX on various shows, both radio and TV and so all had a following throughout the area and they appeared at various functions as a trio, until the decision was made to add a drummer for better dance music, and Jack London came into the picture. When Circle 8 Ranch went off the air at CKNX-TV, it was felt that the Country Versatiles had the potential to carry a show, the result was Goodtyme Country which ran for about 5 years. During its' tenure on CKNX-TV, the show racked up two CanPro awards before its' demise in 1982.

Soon after this Jack London left the group and has been replaced by a variety of drummers, today it's Karry Jackson who holds down the drummers' chair, and today there are two new additions to the group to round out its' versatility in the persons of Melissa Diebold on fiddle and Al Widmeyer on dobro, lead guitar and other various string instruments, and oh yes, he also sings a mean song. Now a bit about the individuals: -

Len Love has been pounding the piano for most of his life, a native of Listowel. His hero and heroine were Reg Bitton and Cora Robertson of the CKNX Ranch Boys, so when Len got the call to audition as a replacement for Cora who was taking a leave of absence, it didn't take Len long to apply for the position. It was a successful audition and Len got his indoctrination with the Ranch Boys, playing to a crowd of 1,500 dancers at the Sauble Beach Pavilion and when Cora came back, Len was kept on. After the Ranch Boys, it was some solo work and then came the Country Versatiles.

Wayne Riehl, from the Stratford area paid his dues playing fiddle for various local bands, including The Country Cousins, who were three-time winner in a band contest at Cookstown. This led to an album with Arc Records with the Country Cousins. Wayne also reached the top ten in Shelburne for three years in a row, competing against all the top fiddlers in



Left to Right: Back Row: Karry Jackson, Al Widmeyer, Gerald Davidson
Front Row: Len Love, Wayne Riehl, Melissa Diebold

Canada. The next move was with the Country Versatiles.

From Plattsville, Ontario, **Gerald Davidson** cut his teeth playing and singing in his dad's band for a number of years, until striking out on his own. Gerry entered and won a number of singing contests and won many prizes including the top spot at the Open Singing Contest in Simcoe. A contest at CKFH in Toronto led to a record release on the Condor label and then came appearances on WWVA radio out of Wheeling, West Virginia, where Gerry still appears occasionally.

Young fiddler, **Melissa Diebold** from Waterloo, via St. Clements, has a bright future ahead in her chosen career of music. She played for five years with a Kitchener group, Denim and Lace, was featured on last year's Barn Dance in Howick along with Detour, and now has joined The Country Versatiles, for a series of shows.

Al Widmeyer, first saw light of day in Hanover and always wanted to play music. He can recall standing in front of a

stage at a show his parents took him to and watching Hughie Elder play all night; today Highie is his father-in-law. Al hit the road as a sideman for many Canadian country bands such as Joe Firth, Paul Weber and The Golden Fiddle Music Company, and eventually decided that the relative security of a day job was more to his liking and today can be found behind the wheel of a bus. However, music can't be laid aside so easily, and after a period of retirement from the music scene, Al has been added to the roster of The Country Versatiles and The Barn Dance.

Country Versatiles is the name and versatile is the game with this dedicated and talented group.

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Howdy Folks:

Who would ever believe after sixty years of Barn Dance History, that an average of more than 1,000 attended each of the six shows we presented this year?

Many members of the Barn Dance Historical Society attended our Fiddlers' Convention and Hayloft Hoedown on Sunday, October 5th at the Royal Canadian Legion in Wingham.

It all began at 10:00 a.m. when our ace repairman Ernie King and violin builder Louis Currah demonstrated what they do in their workshops. The concert began at 1:00 p.m., featuring the following fiddlers: Glenn Eden from Owen Sound, Roland Lozon from near Chatham, Eddie Mole of Owen Sound, John Doerr of Kitchener, also the Beckett Family from Kemble, Ontario (Tyler Beckett - 11 years old, Lindsay - 8 years old, and their Grandpa Stan Beckett. Their father and great grandpa also play fiddle, but were unable to attend to perform as a complete four generation act.) The popular Tiffin Family Band, fiddler Joe Tiffin, his daughter Joan on keyboard, daughter Shirley, who sings and plays banjo, Joe Jr, singer and guitar picker, presented a sample of the kind of Ole Tyme music they play. Then Joe's granddaughter Janet McGlynn stepped her way into the spotlight and wowed the crowd with her step dance act. Janet has appeared in Nashville and in Europe, and teaches step dancing. (Anyone interested, call Janet at (519) 884-1265). The fiddlers and dancers were all presented with the Barn Dance Historical Society Appreciation Award, then all played in the big fiddle roundup. Several of last year's players also participated: Gerry Smith from Exeter, Lloyd Warwick from Bluevale, Wayne Sharpe from

Collingwood and Vic Pasowisty from New Hamburg.

Once the Hayloft Hoedown began, Gordon's Ole Tymers, with Mary Hehn on guitar, Gord Wall on fiddle, and Doris Walker and Ethel Adams taking turns on the piano, began to play. Lloyd Otterbein chimed on the Dobro, the Tillotson Sisters from Langton sang, and Norm Andrews from Pickering beat the drum. Singer Bruce Ilodson from Delhi picked up his guitar, and Al Storey from Innerkip and Norman Priebe from Crosswell, Michigan played their fiddles. Wayne and Judy Otterbein sang some nice songs together, and the Heywood twins, Janessa and Kianna, came on stage with their daddy (Grant) and grandpa (Earl) for the finale, to sing This Little Gospel Light of Mine.

A special thanks to Lynn Russwurm and Len Love for keeping the stage alive with music, Gary Pietrick for helping with MC work, Dave Wall acting as doorman and handling the 50-50 draw (which was won by Joe Tiffin). Also, thanks to Dave and Marie Wallace, June Therrien, Martha Heywood, Darlene King, Pearl Hodgins, Lois McNally, Shirley Russwurm, and Wayne, Judy and Helen Otterbein for their volunteer work.

I hope I didn't miss anyone who helped to present this event. A good time was had by all, and so, until we meet agains, THE SHOW MUST GO ON!!

Earl Heywood,
Founder,
Honourary President, Advisor.

NEWS, NOTES 'N EVENTS

(continued from page 4)

Congratulations to Gordon Wall, leader of Gordon's Ole Tymers, who play regularly for dancing at the Wingham Armouries. Back in September, Gordon entered the Huron County Theshermans' 36th Anniversary of the Blyth Steam Show's old time fiddle contest, and won the trophy in the 70 years and over class.

Ronnie Prphet and Glory Ann are two fine Canadians who have made a name for themselves both in the United States and Canada. They are presenting their show at the Boxcar Willie Theatre in Branson, Missouri, from November 13th to December 13th, 1997.

Canadian country recording artist Carroll Baker performed another of her one night stage shows at the River Run Centre in Guelph, Ontario, on Saturday evening, August 25th, 1997.

Canada's most famous yodeller, Don Reynolds, died Saturday, August 16 in Brampton, Ontario, at the age of 76, from complications of Alzheimer's Disease. Reynolds won his way into the hearts of thousands of fans who knew him as "The King of the Yodellers", achieving world wide recognition in Australia, U.S.A., and Canada. Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, he got to appear in a Hollywood movie with Gig Young. In 1967, the year of Canada's 100th birthday, Don Reynolds starred with his wife, Cindy, singing for CKNX radio on a series of shows on Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance. We extend our sympathy to his wife and loved ones.

NOTE: Artists wanting mention in this column, please forward your information to Earl Heywood, Box 443, Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0

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