

The Barn Dance Opera Journal

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The Barn Dance Historical Society Inc.
and Entertainment Museum

Barn Dance Website: <http://www.barndance.ca>

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Spring Edition

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What is "The Barn Dance" and Who is Ernie King?

by Grant Heywood

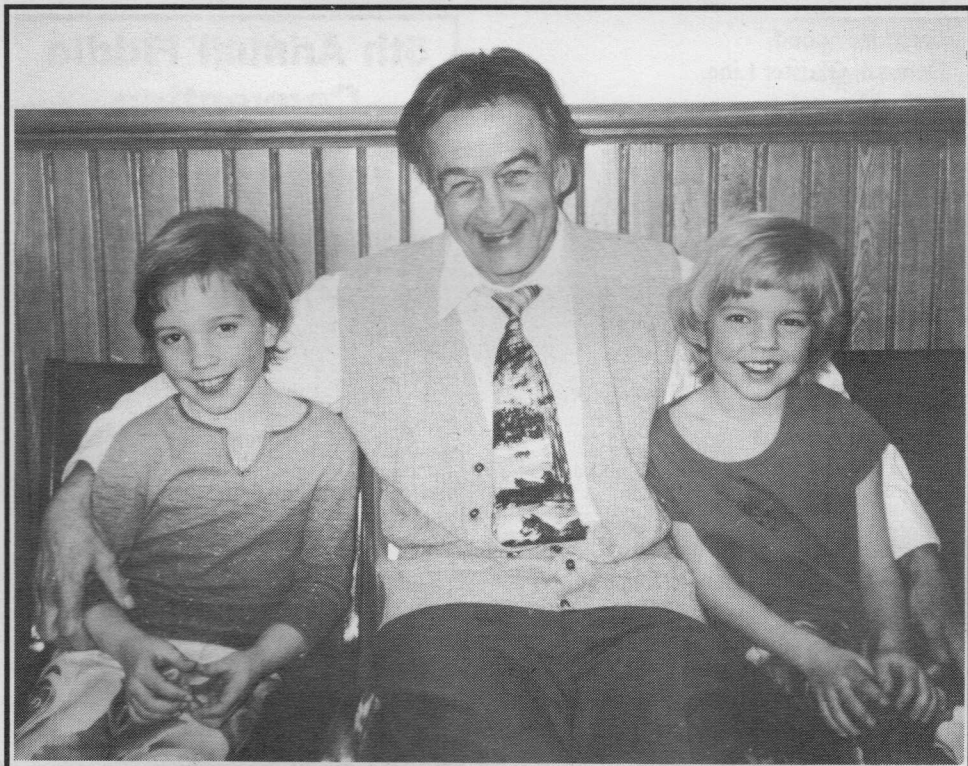
Anybody who has lived within the broadcasting area of CKNX Radio 920, over the past 50 to 75 years, or is associated with the Barn Dance Historical Society, would most certainly have the answers to these questions. But if you were from outside the area, or a young adolescent, you wouldn't have a clue. Most of us know the Barn Dance as "Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance" and most

of us remember Ernie King as that handsome country singer with the Ranch Boys band who performed on the Barn Dance and became popular on the Circle 8 Ranch T.V. show on CKNX, in Wingham, Ontario.

"Why, everyone's heard of the Barn Dance, and who doesn't know Ernie King," you might say. And back in its "heyday" from the late 40's to the early 60's that was true of the Barn Dance and Ernie King. That's because it was constantly promoted

via the region's only radio station, CKNX, and later on, television as well. So many of us have a connection with that past history. Today, though, we are inundated with media coverage from 500 satellite T.V. channels to internet fantasyland, not to mention, every conceivable entertainment option at our every whim. To most of us that's progress, but if you're a businessperson, that's competition. But the Barn Dance isn't trying to compete. Quite frankly, I think that it stands alone as a unique entity unto itself. What I mean is there really isn't an entertainment concept around that is steeped in local and national history like the Barn Dance and encourages new up and coming local talent to reach for the stars. You would be hard pressed to find a professional country variety show of old and new artists, where you could bring the whole family and be thoroughly entertained.

Ernie King has a lot of fond memories of his days travelling with Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance. "There's a lot of nostalgia even when some of the original members are featured on today's Barn Dance shows," said Ernie. So, I asked Ernie what the present day Barn Dance means to him. Ernie said, "Today's young talent is better than it was back then. The new musicians and entertainers are more professional about how the sound and look. I mean, don't get me wrong, back in my days of the Barn Dance we had some great singers and musicians, and they were at the top of

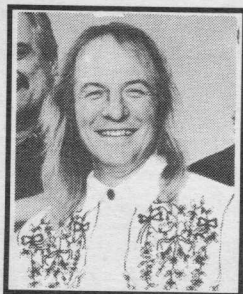


The young and the not so young. Barn Dance Pioneer Award recipient, and long time country singer on Circle 8 Ranch, Ernie King, in the middle. From left to right on either side of Ernie are the 8 year old "Heywood Twins", Janessa and Kianna, following their singing duet at the recent "The Tradition Continues" Barn Dance Show. Their dad, Grant Heywood plays in the Barn Dance Band and is editor of the Barn Dance Opera Journal.

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The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



This past winter has to go down as one of the longest on record. Well, it was a great way to get rid of those winter 'blahs' when a sold out crowd showed up for "The Tradition Continues" Barn Dance show on Sunday, March 18, at the Heritage Theatre, Town Hall, in Wingham. If you weren't there, you missed a great performance by some of the best up and coming young country talent around, and, some of Canada's top country recording artists, John Landry and Stacey Lee, of LACE. They were all "GREAT"!! With this kind of successful audience turnout and positive reaction, I'm sure there will be a repeat performance (with a new lineup, of course) come next March. I especially enjoyed seeing a lot of old friends I hadn't seen in years, being a hometown boy myself.

As you know, we have a newly elected Barn Dance board of directors. I would like to congratulate our new president, Shirley Russwurm. Shirley is experienced and will undoubtedly keep things moving along. Shirley's husband Lynn (Barn Dance Pioneer Award recipient) has been involved with the Barn Dance for many years and will be available as advisor. Also, congratulations to the rest of the newly elected board as well.

A round of applause is in order for our outgoing president, Wayne Otterbein. Wayne served as president for 2 terms, (maybe longer, I don't know) but I know it seemed like an eternity (especially for Wayne). Wayne brought with him, a lot of ideas, direction, and passion. Being the president can often put you in the 'hot seat' and it can be difficult to always make the right decisions. But we learn as we go, and then get on with it. Let's face it, the president is only as good as the team that works together, otherwise it's a "one person show", and the Barn Dance

Historical Society is made up of many, many volunteers who give willingly of their time to make sure the job gets done. THANKS to everyone connected to the Barn Dance, we appreciate your effort to keeping the tradition alive.

Last, but not least. Our fundraiser, the Blyth Jamboree Campout, is one of the best weekend entertainment packages going. It gets bigger and better every year, and it's a great way to meet people, learn about fiddles, guitars, and songwriting, jam on the big stage with a band, buy or swap instruments, meet recording artists and musicians, by some great country music C.D.'s or tapes, and enjoy free bluegrass music on Friday night and free gospel music on Sunday morning. And on Saturday night the "BIG" Barn Dance show and dance featuring Canadian recording artist Marie Bottrell, and several other guests, with the Barn Dance Band and the Millennium Cowboys. Hosted by that smoooooth talkin' radio personality of reknown, M.C., Mr. Jim Swan. See you there.

Any Comments?

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(or leave a message)

BARN DANCE WEBSITE:

<http://www.barndance.ca>

Earl Heywood

Founder, Honourary President, Advisor

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5th Annual Fiddle Convention

Registration for Sept. 30, 2001

Phone John Heaman at

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email: jkheaman@primeline.net



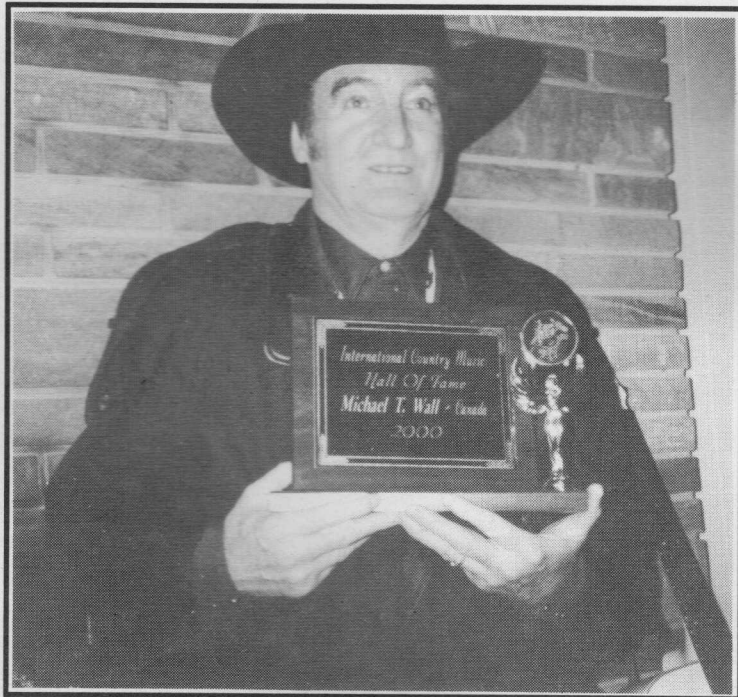
Al Widmeyer, producing Carol Johnson and Wayne Shultz's latest C.D. at Uncle Gerry's Place, in the studio control room. Alongside Al, is owner/operator and engineer, Gary Hintz.

IN MEMORIAM

DON GRESHAM - of Murwillumbah, Australia, suddenly collapsed from a stroke, on Saturday, February 10th, where he was rushed by helicopter to the Gold Coast Hospital at Southport, in Queensland. Shortly after, Don passed away from an existing hear anurism. His funeral was held February 15, 2001, at the Anglican church in Murwillumbah, where 180 friends and relatives gathered for the service.

Don Gresham was laid to rest in the Murwillumbah Lawn Cemetery, with his favourite cowboy hat, thumb pick, and pen and paper to continue with his music and songwriting.

Don ran a fan club for Earl Heywood in Australia, and became a member of the Barn Dance Historical Society in Canada. He also made an appearance on the Barn Dance in Lucknow, Ont., on June 7, 1997, as well as appearing on CKNX radio. Don donated many photos of outstanding artists in Australia, as well as an Australian map to the Barn Dance Hall of Fame and Museum, in Wingham. Don is survived by his wife Noella.



Michael T. Wall, "The Singing Newfoundlander", showing his Best of Texas Hall of Fame Award. He received it after being inducted into the Lone Star State of Texas (CMA) Country Music Association Hall of Fame.

Photo by M.J. Overton Photos.

MARIE HARRIET WILTON - of Old Woman River, Ontario, passed away suddenly on April 10, 2001, at Victoria Hospital, in London, Ontario. She was the beloved wife of the late Harold Wilton (2000), dear mother of two sons, David and Mark and their wives, Shirley and Karen, five grandchildren and great grand mother of Omar. Also survived by one brother, Earl Heywood and his wife Martha. The funeral took place in Lions Head, at the Davidson Chapel with Charles Gingerich officiating. Since Marie was Earl Heywood's sister, she helped her brother Earl, by starting a fan club in his honour, when Earl first became a recording artist on RCA Vicotr records. In those early days, Earl and his sister Marie, used to sing harmony at church events and school concerts. She was also a faithful member of the Barn Dance Historical Society.

JOHN BELLAND, a life member of the Stratford Musicians Association, died on January 7, 2001. John's musical career spanned 62 years, and as a euphonium horn player, he played in many groups, including the Stratford Boys Band and Canada Navy Band. He also played a role in the Stratford Festival Orchestra, and the Stratford Concert Band. His favourite tune was, "The Flight of the Bumblebee" (a euphonium solo). John is survived by his wife, Doris, who was one of the Seiler Twins of the original CKNX Barn Dance era, and is also survived by one daughter.

On behalf of the members of the Barn Dance Historical Society, may our deepest sympathy go out to the families of those listed above, who were associated with our Foundation.

ON THE ROAD

This past winter, Al Widmeyer and his wife Sue, drove down to Nashville to attend a huge Bluegrass / Dobro convention, which is the long term for "Pickin' Party". Al has a custom designed dobro guitar made by Ernie King, from his workshop in Wingham, and it was a hit with a lot of the pickers in Nashville.

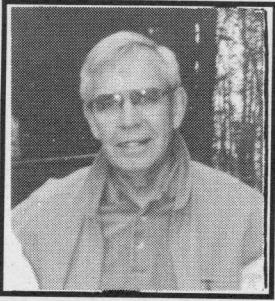
At the 'main event', there were approximately 60 dobro players on stage at one time. Al also performed on stage, alongside big name pickers like, J.D. Crowe, and Jerry Douglas, to name a few. I'm sure if you want to hear more about this musical weekend, Al would oblige. You can catch Al, at the 4th Annual Barn Dance Campout Jamboree Weekend, on Saturday, May 26, at the Blyth Arena Complex, where he will be conducting a dobro workshop.



Backstage at the recent Barn Dance "The Tradition Continues" show at the Wingham Heritage Town Hall Theatres, pictured from left to right is CCMA Award Winner, John Landry, with the twin fiddlers from Hanover, Daniel Mighton and Ian Leith, and Stacey Lee from the Juno nominated group "Lace".

Just Fiddling Around . . .

with Bill Oja



Beating out 28 fiddlers from 3 states in the Seniors Division of Barre, Vermont Fiddle Contest is a smiling **RAY LaMARCHE** of Kirkfield, Ont., receiving his trophy from association president, **LEE DEYETTE**. Keep in mind Ray has only been fiddling for 5 years.



Two of the continent's finest musicians (who worked on Mike Stevens harmonica CD) are **DON REED** of Sudbury who won Shelburne 1980-81-82 and is much in demand in studios in Los Angeles and Nashville. With Don is **STEVE PITICCO**, the Canadian Country Music Associations Guitarist of the Year and also won the same award for the European Country Music Association.



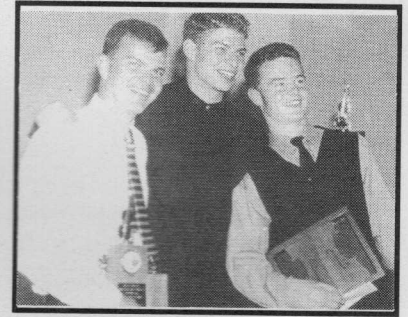
The **STACEY BROTHERS** of Stratford, **LARRY** and **RON** make one of their rare duet appearances at the Maryhill Knights of Columbus Hall. On the right is **BILL ELLIOT**, president of Canada's largest, Orangeville Fiddle Camp.



Directors of the Friends of Canadian Old Tyme Fiddle Music **GEORGE LINSEY** (r) and **BILL OJA** (l) meet at CBS's Head Office with Television Variety Program Heads **SLAWKO KLEMKIW** and **GEORGE ANTHONY**. CBC has not budged on having fiddle music on television even in spite of nearly 80,000 signatures sent in to the tax supported Public Broadcaster in the past 3 years.



At the Central Canada Bluegrass Awards in Huntsville **AL WEIDMEYER** conducts the popular dobro workshop.



Winners of last years Canadian Grand Masters Invitational Fiddle Championships in Ottawa show **SHANE COOK** (c) of Dorechester, winner, with **MARK SULLIVAN** (r), second, of Bowmanville and Elora's **SCOTT WOODS**, third.



Harmonica player **MIKE STEVENS**, of Brighton, Ont. plays for his dog. Mike just finished a harmonica CD of Canadian fiddle tunes using two of Canada's top musicians, Don Reed and Steve Piticco. Mike just finishes a world tour with an appearance with the Knoxville Symphony and then an appearance on the Grand Ole Opry with Jim and Jesse.

COUNTRY CALENDAR



by **Doreen Brown**

(Toronto and surrounding area)

* **E-Z Country**, appearing at the Collingwood Legion, the second Sunday of each month.

* **May 12**, a tribute to Elvis featuring Jay Zanier, Geri Regular & The Koasters, Kelly Vohnn & Graceliners at the Stepen Leacock Theatre, Keswick - 7:30 p.m. MC Blair Ravenhill. For tickets call 1-800-265-0710.

* **May 27**, The Heart and Lung Patients Support Services of Ontario, presents country, western and down east music at the Royal Canadian Legion, Br. 73, 2 Robertson St., Scarborough, featuring Joe Tucker & Second Wind Band with Ray Chiasson. For tickets call Lorraine Marshall at (416) 686-8051 or toll free 1-877-459-4239 from 3 to 11 p.m.

* **May 4 & 5, also July 6 & 7**, Jenny & Josie featured at Rose & Shamrock, Rosetown Inn, 226 Queen St. E., Brampton. (905) 455-3900.

* **June 22 to 24**, Tottenham Bluegrass Festival 18th annual. 3 days of bluegrass music, with workshops, children's programs, pick and sing around the fire. Camping. For tickets (905) 936-4100 or 1-888-238-4727. Visa accepted.

* **Port Perry Old Time Fiddle Club** meets the 4th Wednesday of each month, Scugog Community Centre.

* **Good Time Country Music Club**, 1 to 5 Sundays, at Kingside Park, Oshawa. Phone (905) 433-8662.

* **Shallamar (Kirkfield)** presents Saturday night entertainment with Chuck Stewart & The Country Strings, featuring John Sherman and Fred Earl. 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. No cover.

* **July 13 to 15**, Prestion Springs Park 7th annual Can. Country Bluegrass Family Jamboree on the Trent River near Hastings, Ont. Call Lynn & Al Preston (705) 696-2268.

* **Appearance by Doreen Brown** - April 19, Holland Landing Community Centre; April 28, Oprey Toronto; May 4, Alton Community Centre; May 22, Bond Head, (pot luck supper); May 26, Blyth Campout; July 13-15, Maple Leaf Country Jubilee, Friday night show; August 3 to 5, Classic Country Music Reunion.

* **August 3 to 5**, Classic Country Music Reunion Jamboree at Centennial Park, Trenton. Sunday night special tribute to Willis Jarvis. All star cast for our 10th anniversary show. Tickets (905) 986-4140.

July 13 to 15, Maple Leaf Country Jubilee, Baldwin, Ont. Traditional country music event with rough camping, open mike and main stage. Featuring top Canadian talent. Location Sentimental Journey, 23906 Hwy. 48, south of Sutton. (905) 473-1275; web site www.ralphcashen.com



DOREEN BROWN spent some time in Hawaii this past winter. She is seen here with a copy of the Barn Dance Opera Journal in hand, standing alongside one of the Hawaiian welcoming committee at the airport. (Hey Doreen. Can we all come with you the next time??)

BARN DANCE SOUVENIRS

Great Christmas Gift Ideas!!

Souvenir Mugs -	\$ 5.00 each
CD - Vol. 1	\$19.00 each
CD - Vol. 2	\$19.00 each
Cassette - Vol. 1	\$10.00 each
Cassette - Vol. 2	\$10.00 each
CD - Vol. 1 & 2	\$30.00 set
Souvenir 1997 Calendar	\$ 5.00 each
Barn Dance Logo T-Shirts (black or white only)	
Sizes M, L, XL	\$15.00 each
Souvenir Hats	\$12.00 each

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**HOWDY FOLKS:**

First of all, I'd like to commemorate and congratulate all the people who ever helped to pioneer CKNX Radio 920 on your dial. Remember, CKNX Radio was founded February 20, 1926. It was a cold blustery day when the founder W.T. 'Doc' Cruickshank decided to build a small radio transmitter on his mother's bread board. After gathering together some old radio parts in his shop, he followed a diagram from a Popular Mechanics magazine and sure enough he had a transmitter that worked. And the rest is history. That small private radio station grew into one of the most progressive live talent promoters in the history of

Canadian broadcasting. And that spirit still exists today.

On February 20, 2001, CKNX Radio 920, in Wingham, observed their 75th anniversary, and remain the country music voice of Southwestern Ontario. Through the Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum, I am proud to say we have honoured up to 60 artists (so far) with a Barn Dance Pioneer Award. Many of these musicians and entertainers got their start on radio station CKNX, in Wingham. Thanks to 'Doc' and CKNX for that first opportunity on the radio airwaves.

The progress we are making in the Barn Dance Hall of Fame and W. T. 'Doc' Cruickshank Memorial Museum, is growing day by day. New showcases of memorabilia and special reproductions have been arriving. We have some beautiful portraits on display, including Shania Twain, who has been country music's highest record seller world-wide, and a great picture portrait of Canada's Queen of the Autoharp. More that 60 new productions have arrived to date, with more to follow. Remember the museum is always open by appointment. Just phone 1-519-357-2160, Wingham, Ontario. We expect

to be open daily, Monday to Saturday, from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. early in June, until the end of September this year.

On another note, a "BIG" thank you, goes out to Shane Wilder, program director of the Trans American Broadcasting Corporation, based in California. Shane is an old friend of mine and he is now playing the songs from the two Barn Dance CDs Vol. 1 and 2, of our Saturday Night Barn Dance artists. He features 4 hours of Canadian country music on a daily basis. Strictly, 4 hours daily of Canadian country artists can be heard over 80 American radio stations. I will have a full story on Shane Wilder's colourful career and what he is doing for our Canadian performers. Watch for this to be featured in the next issue of the Barn Dance Opera Journal.

I hope to see you at the next Barn Dance function. As I've always said, as long as you friends and neighbours out there, keep enjoying great country entertainment,

THE SHOW MUST GO ON...

Earl Heywood
Founder, Hon. President,
Advisor, Museum Curator

COME JOIN US!!

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- The opportunity to PARTICIPATE by sitting on Committees.
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