

The Barn Dance Opera Journal

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The Barn Dance Historical Society Inc.
and Entertainment Museum

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Vol. 37 2003

10th Anniversary Spring Edition

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A Barn Dance Worth Remembering

by Grant Heywood

It was around 1960 or '61 and it is almost as vivid as if it were yesterday. I wasn't quite a teenager yet and so my mom decided to take me along to the Saturday Night CKNX Barn Dance in Formosa, Ontario. You would think being the son of a Barn Dance entertainer, that I would have seen my fair share of Barn Dances. Not so. My mom would usually only take me when they were in Wingham or the nearby area. But this was a Hallowe'en dance and was close to our home town of Wingham, so we wouldn't be too late, and we'd get to see all the great costumes and see my dad perform as well.

Now Formosa is a quaint little town nestled in a limestone rock valley near Mildmay, Ontario. As a kid, I always remembered it to be like some magical place out of a storybook. Back then, there was the Palace Gardens with it's overflowing well, winding stream, rock formations and peacocks wandering the grounds, not to mention live country music on the outdoor bandstand on Sunday afternoons. The Formosa Spring Brewery, the beautiful stone Catholic church on the hill, and the community centre where the Barn Dance was being held.

Formosa and surrounding area was a place where the CKNX Barn Dance would play to capacity crowds and tonight was no different. There was already a number of people waiting outside before the doors opened. Don Robertson was pulling his old stand up bass out of his 1950's Chev Panel truck, and I also recognized the woodgrain sided station wagon (often called "Woody's") with CKNX Radio emblazoned on the doors. Elmer Purdon, (who was also a neighbour of ours) had his headset on and was

tweaking the controls for the live radio broadcast that night. By now, people were streaming through the front doors and the hall was filling up like a jug of water.

The community centre was mainly of wood construction and had an ambience and smell about it, like the old wooden dance halls that were scattered along the shores of many Lake Huron locales. Mom and I watched from the side of the stage as the musicians took their places, the lights went up and like a barker from some sideshow circus, Johnny Brent briskly took the microphone and said, "From coast to coast, people like old time music most. Broadcasting live from the Formosa Community Centre, it's the CKNX Saturday Night Barn Dance." WOW!! What a send off. The fiddles started playing, people started hollering and dancing. It was quite a spectacle for a kid my age, and it had a real "showbiz" sizzle and appeal

about it. Everyone was smiling, dancing, and having a great time, and that feeling was reflected on the faces of every performer on stage. It was such a magic night.

Being a youngster, I was impressed by the Hallowe'en costumes. Everybody went to great lengths to outdo each other since there were cash prizes for several categories that night. I can remember Johnny Brent getting everyone with a costume, to dance around the front of the stage in a circle, so they could judge them accordingly. Al Cherney stepped forward, turned around and grinned at the band and said "Heel and Toe Polka, boys", and away they went. I'll never forget that song being played, because they played it over and over, and over again until the judging was finally completed. Whew!

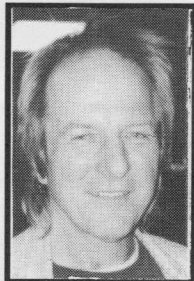
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My first Barn Dance as a performer at the Formosa Old Boys & Girls Reunion in 1991. From left to right: Lloyd Bank, Ernie King, Martha Heywood, Michelle King, Vic Pasowisty, Mel Lavigne, Lynn Russwurm, Bill Mankiss, Lorne Prince, Patricia Heywood, Virginia Harkness, Earl Heywood, Grant Heywood, and 3 young local stepdancers in front.

The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



Spring! Spring! ... did somebody say spring? Maybe that's what Terry Sumsion meant when he sang the song, "Please Wake Me Up I'm Dreaming". It has been a tough winter though, to say the least.

With our 6th Annual Blyth Campout fast approaching, most folks will be happy to know that all of the weekend events will be held in the new Blyth Arena Complex, and we promise it will be much warmer than last years campout. We are looking forward to seeing old friends and hope to meet a whole bunch of new folks too.

This issue of the Journal is dedicated mainly to the Barn Dance of yesteryear. Many pictures of the performance of Barn Dance originals from the "Golden Era" are included in this anniversary issue. We were fortunate, and honoured to have many of the original performers from the CKNX Barn Dance days, perform to a 'sellout' crowd at the Wingham Heritage Theatre, on March 16. For those attending it was like a trip down memory lane. Many had an opportunity to meet and greet Barn Dance stage performers.

I would really appreciate hearing from anyone who has fond memories and stories from the early Barn Dance days, or Circle 8 Ranch. Tell me about some of your favourite performers, performances, where and when. Maybe you can jog your memory about personal experiences, or CKNX radio or television shows. Who knows, maybe you were milking the cows when you first heard Cactus Mac sing Squaws Along The Yukon over the air-waves. Or maybe you met one of the famous fiddlers from the Barn Dance, such as: Ward Allen, Al Cherney, or even Rossy Mann. Or the first time you heard the sweetheart of the Barn Dance, Sharon Strong. Heck, maybe you're even related to someone from the Barn Dance. I know that I am, cause I'm always called "son of Earl". (but I've learned to live with it). It

doesn't have to be too long either. Just 2 or 3 paragraphs. (longer if your mind really takes off!)

Since this is the tenth anniversary of the Barn Dance Historical Society, we would like to relay some of those stories, by printing them in upcoming issues of the Barn Dance Journal. So ... PLEASE, let your mind wander back to those good old days, and think about how so many others would love to read and share your memories. I know I would.

You can send your stories or comment by regular mail or e-mail. Or just pick up the phone and call. Better yet! Talk to me at the next upcoming Barn Dance. See you there.

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<http://www.barndance.ca>

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and Lynn Russwurm.

THE 2003 BARN DANCE SCHEDULE

* **MAY 23, 24 & 25 - 6th Annual Blyth Campout and Jamboree Weekend.** Show and Dance at the Blyth Recreation Complex and Campgrounds. For details, call (519) 357-2329 (evenings).

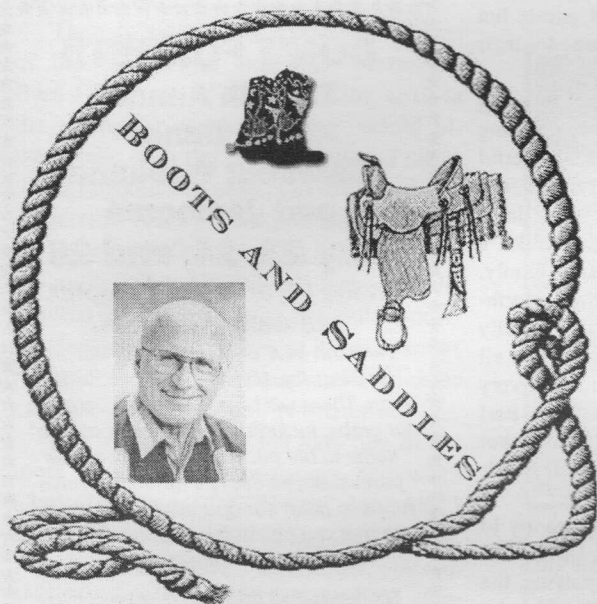
* **JUNE 14 - Wellesley Barn Dance.** Wellesley Arena, Wellesley, Ontario. Sponsored by the Wellesley Lions. Phone (519) 357-2160.

* **AUGUST 2 - Forest Barn Dance.** Forest Arena, Forest, Ontario. Call (519) 357-2160.

* **SEPTEMBER 6 - Huron County Playhouse, Grand Bend.** Show only

* **SEPTEMBER 28 - Wingham Ole Tyme Fiddle Concert and Hayloft Hoedown.** Talent search. Sponsored by the Barn Dance Historical Society. Held at the Royal Canadian Legion, Victoria Street, Wingham.

* **OCTOBER 19 - The Tradition Continues.** Show only. Held at the Town Hall Heritage Theatre, Main Street, Wingham. Sponsored jointly by the Heritage Theatre and Barn Dance Historical Society.



by Lynn Russwurm

One aspect of country music that's often overlooked is the part it played in the movies. Many of the so-called B-Western heroes were singing cowboys, but many others featured country music artists doing a song or two.

One of the major western series that always had country music artists was the Charles Starrett "Durango Kid" series, in it you could find Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys, Pee Wee King and His Golden West Cowboys, Spade Cooley, King of Western Swing, as well as many single artists such as Hank Penny, Ozie Waters, and many others. For example, Ernest Tubb was in two, "Fighting Buckaroo" and "Riding West" long before he came to the Grand Ole Opry. Later he starred in several B-Western Musicals, most notably "The Hollywood Barn Dance" with guests like Jack Guthrie shortly before he succumbed to the ravishes of TB as his idol Jimmie Rodgers had done some time before. Also Radio Dot and Smokey (Swan) who were later to divorce over a disagreement about their daughter's wedding. My favourite singer Elton Britt was in "Laramie" in which he sang "Chime Bells". I saw this one in the early fifties and I never forgot it. Just recently it ran on the Westerns Channel on satellite TV where I captured it on video tape.

One of the most intriguing Canadian artists to me has always been Allen Erwin, The Calgary Kid. For a long time he was kind of a mystery man in country music as nothing much seemed to be known of him. I remember seeing a list of his 78's in

Eaton's Catalogue in the forties. There were two songbooks published by Peer-Southern in Hollywood about that time. A few years ago there was a two-part article in Country Music News by Doc Rogers where he had come up with quite a bit of information after some extensive research. Sometime in the late forties Hank Snow and The Kid had gone to Hollywood to try to get into the movies. Apparently Hank never made it but the Calgary Kid picked up a few bit parts. A few years ago I

picked up a couple of videos of Monte Hale movies and lo and behold, there was the Calgary Kid doing a one-liner as a ranch hand. He didn't even get a credit, and the movie was called "Home on the Range". In the other one he had a walk-on, no dialog, this was called "Out California Way". Monte Hale was no slouch on a country song, backed up here by Foy Willing and The Riders of the Purple Sage and in colour too. Hank Snow's trick horse "Shawnee" was originally owned and trained by the Calgary Kid. Hank and The Kid also put out a co-featured songbook with many pictures of them with the Hollywood cowboys.

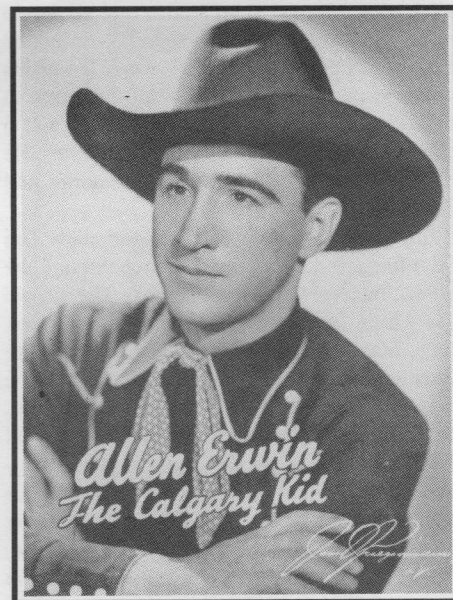
Tim Holt co-starred with Ray Whitley in a series sometime in the forties. Though Ray never became a major singing cowboy, he was a great singer, yodeller and songwriter, and he always did a song or two in this series. He has two major claims to fame and one is as the writer of "Back In The Saddle Again", the other is as the designer of the Gibson J-200 guitar which has long been the acme of the renowned Gibson line. I have a 1950 model which I bought brand new in 1951, and I'd never part with it.

Ken Maynard is credited as the first Singing Cowboy. He was a versatile musician playing guitar, fiddle, harmonica. a Although not very great at any one of them, he was the first. He also sang and again wasn't very good at it, however, he was the one to bring Gene Autry to Hollywood to sing in one of his movies and the result was Gene Autry becoming America's No. 1 Cowboy. In later years when Ken was living in poverty in a trailer, he

would receive an annual anonymous cheque which was later revealed to come from Autry.

The Jimmy Wakely Trio, Jimmy, Johnny Bond and Dick Reinhart appeared in many western movies before Jimmy became a starring singing cowboy himself. They had some of the greatest, smoothest harmony of any group, including the Sons Of The Pioneers. They were in the movies of Hopalong Cassidy, Johnny Mack Brown, William "Wild Bill" Elliott and many more. Jimmy Wakely was one of the most under rated musicians, playing lead guitar, singing and writing much of his own material. Later when he gave up the trio to star on a network radio show, he organized one of the most renowned western swing bands. He had some of the greatest west coast musicians including guitarist Jimmy Wyble and Spade Cooley on fiddle. It was when Wakely went into starring parts in movies that he turned the band over to Spade Cooley and everyone knows where that went. Oh, and by the way Spade can be seen in B-Westerns playing his fiddle in little dance hall and bar trios, without credits.

As usual I'm running out of space, but I must mention one more: - the great Red Foley co-starred with Tex Ritter in a movie called "The Pioneers". And the other night I caught Don Weston singing and yodelling in a Bob Steele B-Western, and the list goes on and on.



ALLEN ERWIN - The Calgary Kid

Music, Memories and You

by Doug Dietrich, Music Director

The time? Sunday, March 16, 2003 at 2:00 pm. The place? Heritage Theatre, Wingham Town Hall. The event? Music, Memories and You, a reinactment of the CKNX Barn Dance featuring all original members. The result? A 'sell-out' for a magical and memorable afternoon of entertaining songs and stories as only the Barn Dance veterans could provide.

The idea for this show started in the fall of 2002. The time seemed right to reunite the legends of the Barn Dance from years gone by while the opportunity still existed. I knew from the start that Ernie King would be a key figure to the success of the idea. Ernie had for the most part 'retired' from performing. However, when I approached him he quickly warmed up to the idea and started offering names of other performers / musicians from the past. We knew we could count on Earl and Martha Heywood, long time figureheads of the Barn Dance. As the list of names grew, I realized that we could indeed put a show together comprised only of original members of the Barn Dance or the Circle 8 TV show. Wherever possible, these people were all quick to accept my invitation. The Heritage Theatre was receptive to the idea and the show was on!

Larry Mercey, a well-known name in the Canadian country music scene, got his start on the Barn Dance. He too agreed to perform on the show and, as fate would have it, turned out to play a larger role than originally intended. While the show was in the planning stages, Larry was appointed General Manager and Artistic Director for the Heritage Theatre. By coincidence, the first show with Larry at the helm, would be the Barn Dance and he would be involved both on and off stage. Planning the show with Larry was a real pleasure. It was his idea to expand the presentation of the music to include interviews with the performers and a chance for the audience to ask questions. He coined the show's title - Music, Memories and You.

Jim Swan served as M/C for the show and did a fine job guiding the audience through the music, interviews and questions. The crowd was a little 'shy' when it came to asking questions, but Jim's interviews elicited several entertaining memories from the past. In addition to the names already mentioned, Mary Elliott, Hank Bedard, Howard 'Smoky' Weber and Bruce Robertson were also featured guests. Musical backup was supplied by the Barn Dance Band with Wayne Riehl on fiddle, Lloyd Bank on steel guitar and dobro, Hugh Elder on guitar, Ron Coulthard on piano and banjo, with Lynn Russwurm and Ernie King sharing duties on the standup bass and rhythm guitar. Not only did

they do a fine job supporting the guests but each one stepped up to the microphone for their own solo performance.

Personally, I am more accustomed to being on stage playing in the band. However, doing back stage duty for this show was a wonderful experience and I appreciate everyone's co-operation. Beginning with the previous day's rehearsal, the whole thing was more like a family reunion, in this case the musical family. It was very interesting to see how the performers interacted, reminisced, joked and generally supported each other. Obviously, they were all enjoying what they were doing and still very much wanted to do a first class show. Earl Heywood was battling a bout of bronchitis, but even at 86 years old was true to his own words "the show must go on".

I would also like to take the opportunity to once again thank the Heritage staff, Dave Wallace of Ernie King Music for supplying the keyboard for the show and the many others who helped make the show a success.

Truly this show brought back lots of memories and, to be sure, created several new ones for many people. The capacity crowd of friends, relatives and faithful followers of the Barn Dance seemed to agree wholeheartedly -- they gave the performers a well deserved standing ovation!!



Howard "Smoky" Weber singing out a pure country tune.



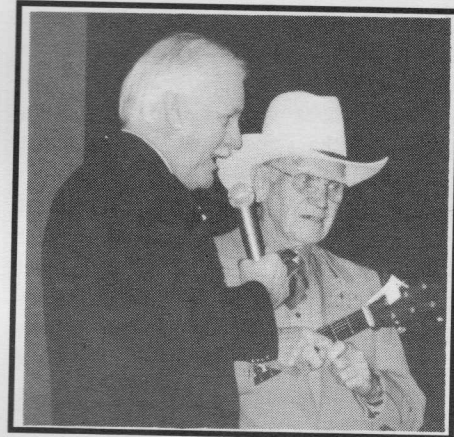
From left to right: Hughie Elder, Lloyd Bank, Wayne Riehl, Lynn Russwurm, Ernie King and Ron Coulthard. Wow! What a band!

DON'T FORGET!! The 6th Annual Barn Dance Campout Weekend and Jamboree

May 23, 24, and 25
at the Blyth Arena Complex
and Camp Grounds.

New this year will be a Silent Auction on Saturday, May 24 from 9 am to 12 noon. There will be a lot of great items up for grabs, including many "musical type" items to bid on. We hope that you will participate, as this is a fun way to raise funds to keep our operating costs down, so that you can enjoy a fun-filled "Barn Dance" weekend.

For details, call (519) 357-2329 evenings.



Earl Heywood seen here talking to M/C Jim Swan about the days of the original CKNX Barn Dance.

Continued from Page 1

Then Johnny would grab the attention of the crowd and announce where the Barn Dance would be performing next, in the upcoming weeks. Johnny would always joke with the crowd a bit and move on to introduce members of the band and singers, as if they were just stepping onto the Grand Ole Opry stage. I can remember my mom fixing my dad's tie just before he strolled on stage in his bright yellow cowboy outfit. He sang some of his own songs to the delight of the crowd and I think he called a square dance or two later on.

But like most kids my age, one of the most significant performances was when Clark Johnston (the "Singin' Irishman") took to the stage. He'd always kid around with Johnny and say, "You know, you can always tell an Irishman". Then he'd stare out at the audience with that twinkle in his eye and say, "but you can't tell him very much". With his tam kilt, and shillelagh, he rolled right into "Something's Always Sure To Tickle Me". I couldn't wait to hear him conjure up all those belly laughs! His face would contort and grimace with every whoop of laughter he could muster. Everyone was in stitches! He always brought the house down with that one song and had everyone laughing until it hurt.

When intermission came, the band members would congregate downstairs for refreshments and discuss what songs to play for the next set, or sometimes get together to strum a guitar and work out a new arrangement. Once they were back on-stage they'd play jigs and reels and country standards, and always played many of the popular requests from the audience. I could tell they were having such a good time, they likely would have played until the sun came up. I know that feeling all too well myself, because I'm not that little kid looking on from the side of the stage anymore. I too am now a Barn Dance Performer.

PHOTOS TAKEN AT THE HERITAGE THEATRE



From left to right: Wayne Riehl, Lynn Russwurm, Ernie King, Mary Elliott, and smiling Hughie Elder.



From left to right: Ernie King (background), Howard "Smoky" Weber, Earl Heywood with Martha to the left, Larry Mercey, Hank Bedard, with Mary Elliott just hidden in beside him.

BARN DANCE JOURNAL ADVERTISING PRICES

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\$300.00 plus GST

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YOU'RE INVITED!!

Mon., June 2, 2003

The Barn Dance Historical Society's General Meeting.

Starting at 7:30 p.m., at the Harvey Krotz Ford Dealership (boardroom), Listowel, Ont.

A notice of motion will be voted on to have Article 2, Section 1, Paragraph E, Stating: that no person shall serve more than two consecutive terms on the board reinstated into our constitution and bylaws.

All members are welcome to attend.

326 Josephine St., Wingham (519) 357-2811



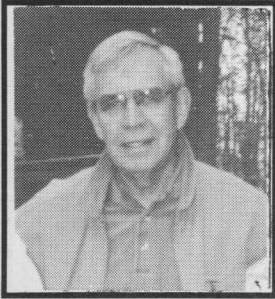
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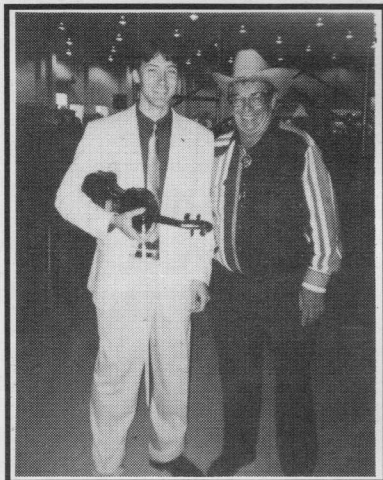
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Just Fiddling Around . . .

with Bill Oja



Known as the "Most Entertaining Fiddler in the US", **VERNON DERICK** is shown here with **STEVE HELTON** and the **FLINT RIVER BOYS** in Miami, FL. This fabulous bluegrass band will be in Ontario end of July at River Valley and other venues. Be sure to catch them!!



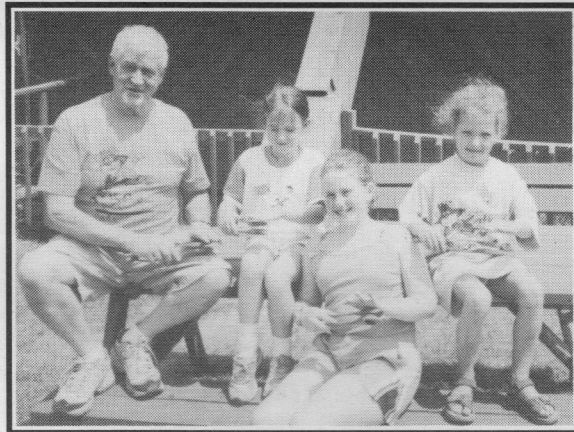
Florida State Fiddle Champion **JASON BARIE** is seen at the Kiwanis Bluegrass Festival in Kissimmee last month. Saying hello is the top US Bluegrass M/C **EVAN CARL**. Evan got into bluegrass following a long career in radio broadcasting. Jason now tours with Carolina Road Bluegrass Band.



At last year's Pioneer Village Black Creek Fiddle Contest the contestants and judges jam it up under the watchful eye of co-ordinator **BOB ARBUCKLE**. This year's contest is on May 19.



The Rotary Club of Orangeville put on their annual tribute to Don Messer Show recently. Seen in the audience was Grammy Winner **WALTER OSTANEK** here with members of the famous Woods musical family of Fergus. Left to right: **MERV, CAROLYN, WALTER, SCOTT** and **LORI**.



At the Orangeville Fiddle and Step Dance School **ERNIE LAPALME** of La Salette shows the junior Spoon Players class just how its done.



ERIKA WEILER of Brampton won the 12 and under fiddle category at Pembroke's Fiddle & Step Dance Contest. Erika's compulsory tunes, waltz, jig and reel just happened to be composed by the fiddlers shown with her. Left to right: **ROBBIE DAGENAIS, BRIAN HEBERT,** and **LOUIS SCHRYER**.



BARB MARTIN promoter of the Don Messer Show Tribute keeps 16 year old Teen Heart Throb **TYLER BECKETT** in line. Seems there's been an increase in the audiences of teen-age girls. Wonder why??

BOOKING THE BARN DANCE

If you are interested in more information about booking the Barn Dance Musical Production, please write to:

Barn Dance Bookings,
P. O. Box 68,
Wingham, Ont. N0G 2W0;
or call

Wayne Otterbein,
(home) (519) 235-4783,
or (bus.) (519) 235-0559

COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown

(Toronto and surrounding area)

- * **May 11 - Country Jamboree** - at Hensall Circle Legion, Mississauga.
- * **New Eton House** - 710 Danforth Ave., Toronto, (416) 466-6161. April 25 - 26 CC Boys; May 2 - 3 Greg Fitzpatrick; May 9, 10, and 16 & 17 CC Boys; May 23 - 24 Silverwings; May 30 - 31, June 6 - 7, 13 - 14, 20 - 21 CC Boys; June 17 - 28 Greg Fitzpatrick.
- * **Appearances by Myrl Blaine Maple Leaf Jamboree**, 707 Srigley St., Newmarket, May 4; Holland Landing Jamboree, May 16; Bond Head, June 24.

* **The Boulevard Pub & Grill** - Lakeshore Blvd. W. at 11th St., presents Josie & The Boys, May 2, 3, 30 & 31. Friday night is guest night, great food, friends and fun.

* **Maple Leaf Country Jubilee** - at Sentimental Journey, 23906 Hwy. 48, Aug. 22, 23 & 24. This is the third year and more details next issue.

* **Alton Legion Jamboree** the second Friday of the month. Ladies bring lunch.

* **Appearances by Doreen Brown** - June 21, Opry Orillia; April 28, Bond Head Fiddle Club; May 4, Chef Adam's Maple Leaf Jamboree, 707 Srigley St., New Market; May 9, Warminster Legion by Geordie Grey; May 23 - 25, Jamboree Campout Weekend, Blyth Community Campgrounds (see you there); June 15, Elmvale Legion; June 19, Holland Landing Jamboree.

* **Oprey Orillia** - features Michael T. Wall, also Joyce Leonard, from USA on June 21. Sundial Restaurant on Hwy. 11.

* **Sandy's Place**, 1848 Weston Rd., Toronto, features Country Music weekly.

* **Orillia Army/Navy Club** with well know Slim Celsie, 4th Sunday of the month.

* **Country Music Store**, 2889 The Danforth, has entertainers drop by every Sat. afternoon. Great fun.

* **Shelburne Legion** has a Jamboree May 11, June 8, Aug. 10. Bring your musical instruments. There's dinner and dancing.

* **Dundalk Legion**, has a Jamboree the fourth Sunday of the month.

* **Twelfth Annual 2003 Classic Country Music Reunion** Aug. 1, 2, & 3 at Centennial Park, Trenton. Features will be country music award winner, Anita Perras; Lorne Hachey, Cliffy Short; Diane Leigh; Karen and Darryl, cloggers; Harvie Howe; Nicole Best; Don Cochrane; Elaine Jarvis. There will be a gospel show Sunday a.m.

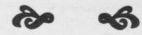
* **Appearance by Joe Tucker** - April 18 - 19, East Coasters, 2862 Keele St., Toronto; May 3, RCL, Daws Rd., 8 to 12.

* **The Wolfe's Howl**, 2399 Cawthra Rd., Mississauga, (905) 272-9653, has country music every Thursday night.

* **20th Annual Tottenham Bluegrass Festival**, all weekend, June 20, 21, & 22. Tickets include camping. Ticket info - Tottenham Bluegrass Festival, Box 922, Tottenham, Ont. L0G 1W0. Tollfree 1-888-BLUGRASS or (905) 936-4100. Special events, workshops, kid's program, beef BBQ, Pick & Sing around the campfire all weekend.

NEWS, NOTES 'N EVENTS

The Barn Dance Entertainment Museum will be having a Grand Opening Celebration at the new museum location (downstairs section of the North Huron Museum, located in the old post office building on the main street of Wingham) later this spring. The museum will be open throughout the summer and hopefully fall months as well. We'll keep you posted on upcoming events regarding the new museum headquarters.



Also of note:

Bluegrass ruled at the Maryhill Knights of Columbus Hall this past March 29. Barn Dance member / performer, Al Widmeyer, and his group Lonesome Wind got the full house crowd all wound up, only to be followed by The Boys From Kentuck, a group of legendary bluegrass luminaries from down Kentucky way. Al hopes to repeat this successful bluegrass show with a few more this summer. Al and Lonesome Wind will be performing at the Blyth Campout Jamboree, on the Saturday evening Barn Dance show.

IN MEMORIAM

Passed away recently this past winter 2003.

DUSTY KING SR. - renowned Canadian country singer from the Hamilton area.

JIM McREYNOLDS - from the famous Jim and Jessie Bluegrass duo.

JOHNNY PAYCHECK - Country legend of the Grand Ole Opry.

JUMPIN' BILL CARLISLE - 90 year old Grand Ole Opry artist.

BARN DANCE SOUVENIRS

- Souvenir Mugs - \$ 5.00 ea.
- CD - Vol. 1 \$20.00 ea.
- CD - Vol. 2 \$20.00 ea.
- CD - Vol. 3 \$20.00 ea.
- CD - Vol. 1, 2 & 3 \$50.00 set
- Cassette - Vol. 1 \$10.00 ea.
- Cassette - Vol. 2 \$10.00 ea.
- Cassette - Vol. 3 \$10.00 ea.
- Souvenir 1997 Calendar \$ 5.00 ea.
- Barn Dance Logo T-Shirts (black or white only)
- Sizes M, L, XL \$10.00 ea.
- Souvenir Hats \$10.00 ea.
- NEW Al Cherny CD - "Live / The Lost Recordings" \$20.00 ea.

All purchases include GST.

Please include \$3.00 per item

for mailing

or pick up at Ernie King Music.

Have a great spring and summer folks, and thanks for supporting our Country Music.



Earl and Martha Heywood with Barn Dance Historical Society president Shirley Russwurm presenting them with a lifetime membership at a recent board of directors meeting.

**HOWDY FOLKS:**

First off, I'd just like to say thanks to my son Grant (editor) for the story he wrote last spring celebrating my 85th birthday. He thought it would be a good idea for me to share some of my early Barn Dance memories, and relate some of the stories from those 'good old days'. We got into a discussion about all the musicians and entertainers who appeared every week on Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance, and as we joked about some of the funnier moments at the Barn Dance Shows, we got to thinking about how comedy was an integral part of the performances.

As Gordie Tapp (a.k.a. "Cousin

Clem") always said, "Corn always sells." In other words, people will always appreciate good humour. The CKNX Barn Dance always had it's fair share of funny, talented entertainers who always got people in a laughing good mood. Some of those comedy veterans included, Cactus Mac, Clarke Johnston (the Singin' Irishman), Elmer and Jed, "Wee" Bobby Clarke, and even Rossy Mann and Don Robertson from the Ranch Boys got into the act. Martha and I still perform a 'wee' bit of comedy at many banquets, shows and entertainment functions. Most folks I know appreciate variety entertainment, it's the "spice of life" I've been told and certainly has kept me going all these years.

Speaking of "wee", how well I used to enjoy "Wee" Bobby Clarke's brand of slapstick comedy on the Barn Dance. One night the Barn Dance played in Hanover, and Bobby set a pail and dipper on stage. Every once in a while during his comedy routine, he would lift the dipper out of the pail and drink some water, and spill some on his clothes while trying to gulp it down. Bobby would drop the dipper on

the floor and proceeded to walk to the front of the stage with the pail pretending he was going to throw the pail at the audience. Once he had the people in stitches, he tossed the contents of the pail on the first two or three rows of the audience. People would scream and try to jump out of their seats, so as not to get soaked, but they soon realized the joke was on them. Nobody got wet! Bobby had thrown a pail of rice, all in good fun. Many times he would use confetti instead. We all had a good laugh except the janitor of the dance hall. Cleaning up the mess just didn't seem that funny to him.

Oh well, that's showbiz. It was a lot of fun then, and it would certainly be an asset to our current Barn Dance to seek out entertainers with a flair for humour. Regardless, we always try to put a smile on the faces of our Barn Dance audiences, with great musicians and excellent talent.

Remember - -

THE SHOW MUST GO ON. . .

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

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