

The Barn Dance Opera Journal

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Spring Edition

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COMIC RELIEF OF THE CORNY KIND

by Grant Heywood

Country music is one of the few genre's of music that can poke fun at itself. When you think about country music, especially in Nashville, how can you not think of some of the songwriters and entertainers who were also some of the movers and shakers of comedy in country music. Comedians such as Minnie Pearl, Grandpa Jones, Homer & Jethro and even stars such as Dolly Parton and Roger Miller used comedy as a mainstay of their entertainment careers.

The syndicated television series, 'Hee Haw' featured many Nashville performers and regulars such as Buck Owens, Roy Clark, Mike Snider, String Bean and our own Canadian export, Gordie Tapp. Gordie always said that people love to be entertained and if laughter is the best medicine, then 'corn sells'. I guess today's equivalent would be Jeff Foxworthy, or maybe Cletus T. Judd, but it's just not the same as it was back in the good old days. I mean, Grandpa Jones was a

great banjo picker and songwriter, Homer & Jethro were funny but they were also serious musicians too. The same can be said for the Hee Haw gang as well. They were all serious songwriters, singers, and musicians, but they had the ability and opportunity to make fun of their own backwoods beginnings with barnyard humour, and on national television no less. Hee Haw was a hit for many years which goes to prove that 'corn' really does sell.

The CKNX Barn Dance wasn't much different when it came to adding comic relief to the mix. During the 1950's local entertainers, Elmer & Jed spawned their own Homer & Jethro type humour on the Barn Dance stage. 'Wee Bobby Clark' and Cactus Mac (noted for his rendition of 'Squaws Along The Yukon') gained notoriety amongst Barn Dance fans during the '50's as well. Belgrave farmer, Clarke Johnson, known as 'The Singin' Irishman' spanned a long career with the Barn

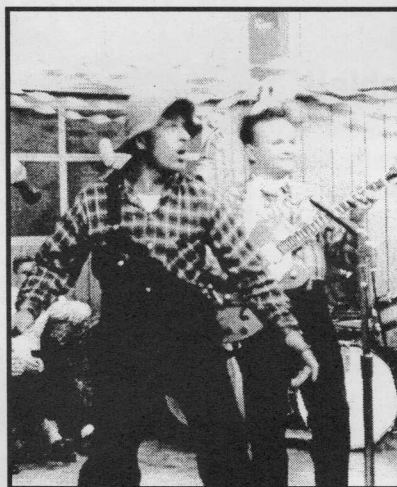
Dance over the years and became synonymous with the song 'Something's Always Sure To Tickle Me'. It was that song that he performed almost every time he was on the Barn Dance stage. I remember oh so well the howls of laughter from the audience every time that Clarke bent over forwards and backwards laughing and chortelling in a swooping high pitch sound at the top of his lungs. He literally brought tears of laughter to all of the eyes who watched him no matter how many times they saw him perform the same song over and over again. Clarke was a skinny Irishman who sported a moustache, a shillelagh, and a green shirt and a tam. He'd always say, 'You can always tell an Irishman...but you can't tell him very much', usually just before his other signature song, 'Good Old Donegal'.

A lot of the corniness and joke telling stemmed from the vaudeville days when singing, performing, and

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Cactus Mac in the 1950's.



Gordie Tapp in the 1960's. Ken Ducharme on guitar.



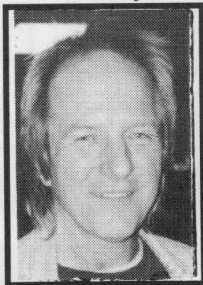
Cousin Opie - still making people laugh.



Clarke Johnson, The Singin' Irishman, on Circle 8

The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



Sure was glad to see that white stuff disappear. I do care about global warming but I will be glad to feel that temperature climb into the double digits again. The old woodpile went down as quick as the temperature did this past winter. Even our pet dog and cat called a truce and curled up together at the foot of our bed just to stay warm. Well, spring may be here but that balmy weather can't get here fast enough for me.

It was nice to see so many folks and friends out to the Barn Dance in Wingham at the Columbus Centre this past March. The show and dance featured many guest performers and the band "Sunrise" also could be considered featured performers as they are not the regular musicians most folks are accustomed to hearing on the Barn Dance stage. Thanks to Brian, Bill, Doug, Ken and guest fiddler, Dan Howlett for playing great music and helping to make the Barn Dance a success. There were a lot of good comments about the show and many were especially directed towards the band. Good work guys.

The new Barn Dance DVD which was taped at last year's Blyth Campout Jamboree show is now available for sale. The DVD cover is quite colourful featuring all of the guest performers on that particular show. Many thanks to everyone who

helped put this project together. The DVD will certainly be a great treasure of Barn Dance memories for folks who want to entertain themselves or to show others what first class entertainment and good old fashioned fun they are missing.

This year will be our 10th anniversary for the Barn Dance Campout in Blyth. Music Director, Doug Dietrich has planned on having most of the regular entertainers and musicians affiliated with the current Barn Dance appear as guests on the big Saturday night Barn Dance show. Doug also has a great guest list of entertainers of all ages for this year's show that you won't want to miss either. We're hoping to make this, our tenth year, one of the best jamborees ever, so tell all your friends, or better yet, bring them along to our Barn Dance Jamboree Campout weekend in Blyth. Details are advertised right here in the Barn Dance Opera Journal. We'll see you there.

Comments? Please contact:

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**9th Annual
Barn Dance
Jamboree
DVD
Now
Available!!**

The 9th Annual Blyth Campout Jamboree was professionally filmed last year and will be available at www.thebardance.ca as well as our upcoming 10th Annual Jamboree this coming May 25, 26 & 27. We hope to possibly have a T.V. or two at the Blyth Complex running the DVD so folks can catch a glimpse of it. Producer, Robert Gibbons did a fine job and captured some moments with folks in the camping area as well as some of the stage set up and afternoon jam as well as the Saturday night show itself. You may be on the DVD and don't even know it!

Special thanks also to Wayne Greve and Scott Taylor for handling the audio and lighting during the filming. Laurie Jonkman did a wonderful job on the cover design which fits the package perfectly. The DVD is a full two hours long and is \$25.00 plus tax. Funds raised through the Campout and DVD support the Barn Dance Museum in Wingham.

The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

P.O. Box 68

Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0

Phone (519) 357-2160

(or leave a message)

BARN DANCE WEBSITE:

www.thebardance.ca

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Shirley Russwurm, Peter Saros, Bill

Simmermaker and Murray Armstrong.

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joking was all a part of the entertainment package. I remember when the Heywood Family was on tour in the Maritimes back in the early 1960's. Our show consisted of that same form of entertainment mixing laughter with song. We were actually on a country music show that had some old vaudeville performers. Lazy Jim Day was a 'hayseed' sort of guy complete with overalls and straw hat. Then there was 'Uncle Frank' who roller skated out onto the stage with a tuxedo, top hat and a cane just before singing and telling a few jokes.

Our own Barn Dance emcee, Jim Swan, knows the value in keeping the audience amused to bide time in between program shuffles on stage. Jim is not unlike a well-tempered circus barker, especially when he brings out our very own 'Cousin Opie' aka Lloyd Otterbein. (also a great dobro player) Now Opie is a throwback to those old vaudeville days, with corny jokes and a 'one of a kind' rainbow suit to match his straight but humorous stage personality. Barn Dance personality Johnny Heaman and his sidekick, Wilbur are two of a kind when it comes to ventriloquist humour. And once again Johnny is singer, violinist and piano player who has found that bein' corny is all part of the show.

Currently, I am working with Kevin Westphal from the 'Saltwater Cowboys' band. Kevin is from the Kitchener area and had nationwide radio success a few years back with 'The Gas Song', a song about buying a horse and tellin' the oil companies where to stick their gas prices. How can you go wrong with a line like 'Just a bale of hay and I'm on my way'. Kevin is writing a bunch more corny songs that the 'average joe' will be able to relate to as well. With song titles like 'The Beer Store' and 'Boil That Water Down' (a 'tongue in cheek' song about the Walkerton water crisis). Kevin is a serious songwriter, he just has a simple but convoluted, twisted way of poking fun at people, gov't, corporations, in everyday situations. Known as the 'Blue Collar Canuck', Kevin hopes to put his sense of humour to the test on a new upcoming

ing C.D.

My good friend Wendell Ferguson, is a well respected guitar player/producer amongst his peers but is well known for his song parodies too. Wendell is just downright witty and has his own brand of cornball humour which he sings about on his latest c.d. 'When the #*&%!!! Hits the Fans'. But don't let his joking nature fool you. He's one of Canada's best country guitar pickers around, not unlike his idol, Roy Clark.

It's nice to know that there are still entertainers out there who believe that being corny isn't an embarrassment. It's an asset if you know how to make people laugh. That's just another facet of a good entertainer. Just take stock in Canada's grain futures is what some of the smart ones are thinkin'. All ya gotta do is 'sell that corn'. Ha Ha ... LOL.

IN MEMORIAM

Dan Grummet recently passed away this past March in his 80th year. Dan and his wife Emma resided in Alamo, Texas in the U.S. Dan and his first wife, Muriel, had two children, Dianne and Joanne, who both live in or near Wingham, Ont. Dan or Danny as many friends knew him, was originally from Seaforth, Ontario.

Danny played steel guitar with the CKNX Barn Dance gang in the 1950's and early 60's and also appeared as one of the backup musicians on CKNX T.V. show "Western Roundup". Danny built steel guitars and amplifiers in his spare time, and eventually got into the restaurant business with his first wife Muriel.

Danny resurrected his playing career when he moved to Brownsville, Texas where he met his second wife Emma.

Danny will be missed by family and friends and the Barn Dance Historical Society sends along condolences. He will be remembered along with many others from the early Barn Dance days in the Barn



A shot from "Western Roundup", CKNX T.V. Show. From Left to right: Danny Grummet, Don Steel, Lucky Ambeault, Al Cherney, Jack Day and Slim Boucher.

Newly Elected Director

Elections for Barn Dance Historical Society Board members was held on Sunday, April 1 at the Wingham Legion. We welcome Murray Armstrong of Zurich, who replaces outgoing director, Doreen Armbruster.

BARN DANCE JOURNAL ADVERTISING PRICES

Business Card Size -

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1/4 Page -

\$75.00 plus GST

1/2 page -

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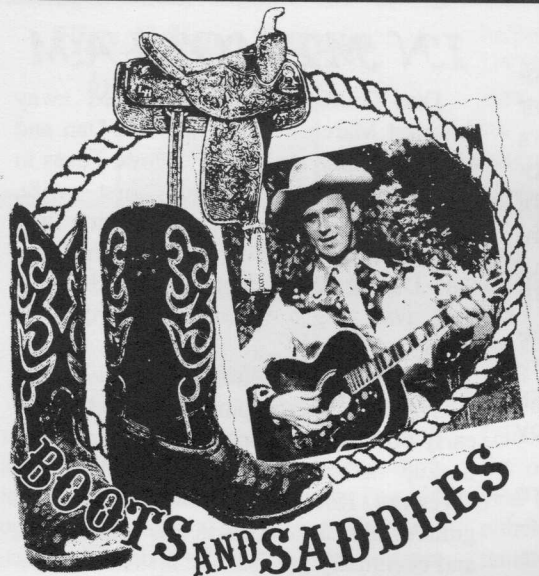
Full Page (inside) -

\$275.00 plus GST

Full Page (back cover) -

\$300.00 plus GST

All prices are per issue.



by Lynn Russwurm

This time we're going to take a look at some of our female songwriter artists that have given us so much pleasure with their song creations. To my mind the greatest of them all was Jenny Lou Carson. Jenny Lou started life as Lucile Overstake in Decatur, Illinois. With her two sisters, Eva and Evelyn they made their way to Chicago and the National Barn Dance with WLS radio in the early thirties to begin their career as "The Overstake Sisters, The Three Little Maids". Two CDs have been reissued by The British Archives of Country Music which illustrate their beautiful harmonies. In 1933 the group broke up with the marriage of Eva to Red Foley, also of the Barn Dance. Evelyn continued as a single on the show as Miss Evelyn, Eva changed her stage name to Judy Mar-



Jenny Lou Carson

tin and worked with Red Foley as Judy Martin and The Mountain Rangers, of course Red Foley was the Mountain Ranger. With this group they recorded some one hundred and fifty songs on 16" transcriptions which were for radio play only. Many of these have now been released by both BACM and Cattle Records from Germany. I was involved with the Cattle Records 2 CDs by supplying them with the material which I received from Keith Titterington of Calgary on cassette. There is another CD in the works from Heritage Music here in Canada of this material in the near future. To get back to Lucille, now known as Jenny Lou

Carson, she worked as a single act on the show and also, and this is very little known, as part of the Winnie, Lou and Sally trio on WLS. Her song writing began to take shape in this period and many of her songs were recorded by Judy Martin and The Mountain Rangers such as "Lonesome for You, Annabelle", "I Won't Need my Six-gun in Heaven", which was also cut by Rex Allen, "Sandy Headed Lad", "I'll Keep Smiling" and many others. She had a song folio published by M. M. Cole of Chicago, who published the songs of all the WLS artists like Gene Autry, Rex Allen, Red Foley, Patsy Montana and others.

Her first big break came in the forties when her song "Jealous Heart" was picked up as a pop song and became one of the all time great music standards with many recordings. In the late forties, she signed a contract with Hill & Range Music who were to publish a song folio each year for the next ten years. To the best of my knowledge there were only three published, I have number 1 and number 3. For a time, Jenny Lou was married to Tiny Hill, one of the big band leaders of the day. Tiny was inclined to record more country music than the other big bands and this helped to set him apart from the others and I would be inclined to think that some of this was the influence of Jenny Lou Carson. However the marriage didn't last as most show business marriages don't and Jenny Lou continued in her song writing career. She did a bit of recording herself and her recordings are eagerly sought out by collectors. She had releases on Decca, RCA and Mercury, but they weren't big sellers



Winnie, Lou and Sally. Left to Right: Lucille Overstake, Helen Jensen and Eileen Jensen.

so are very scarce today.

In the forties she turned out several more that are today country standards such as "A Penny for your Thoughts", "Chained to a Memory", "I'd Trade all of my Tomorrows", "The Lovebug Itch" and "A Bad Penny always Returns", which was one of our own Earl Heywoods' RCA recordings. Came the early fifties and she really hit her stride with songs such as "Marriage Vow", "Let Me go Lover", both by Hank Snow, "Echo of your Footsteps", "Don't Rob another Man's Castle", "Many Tears Ago", "If I never get to Heaven" by Eddy Arnold, "Reaching for the Moon" by Elton Britt and the list goes on and on. An interesting note about "Let Me Go Lover", it originally started out as "Let Me Go Devil" on a recording or two when someone suggested changing it to "Let me go Lover" and it became a giant hit.

The hits slowed down through the sixties and not much is known about Jenny Lou's later life. She passed away on Dec. 16, 1978 in Torrance, California at the age of 63. The legacy of beautiful songs she left us will live forever, as they are still being recorded today, many years after her passage through this life. Plans are in the works for a CD of her own recordings and they will be welcomed by many who still remember her beautiful, gentle voice.

Another great female song writer was Cindy Walker. Cindy headquartered out of California and her writing career goes away back to Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys who recorded many of her songs. Titles such as "Cherokee Maiden",

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"Hubbin' It", "Miss Molly", "Sugar Moon", "Send me a Red Rose", "Bubbles in my Beer", "Blue Bonnet Lane" and "Dusty Skies". I can remember her having a spot in an early Gene Autry movie, and Gene popularized what probably became her greatest standard, "Blue Canadian Rockies" and she had never stepped foot in Canada before that, she wrote it from some Canadian publicity folders when somebody asked her to write a song about Canada. She continued throughout her lifetime creating songs for specific artists and with her track record most of them paid attention when they received mail from Cindy Walker. Some of these songs included "Snowflake", "Anna Marie" and "Distant Drums" for Jim Reeves, "You Don't know Me" and "Take me in Your Arms and Hold Me" for Eddy Arnold and one or two for most of the major artists in the business.

Two more that come to mind are Patsy Montana and her great "I Want to be a Cowboy's Sweetheart". Seems Patsy wanted to write a song and couldn't come up with anything so she took Stuart Hamblen's "Texas Plains" which was one of the popular songs of the day and wrote the lyrics to "Cowboy's Sweetheart" to the tune of "Texas Plains" and then turned around and wrote a new tune for her song



Patsy Montana

and she had the first million selling country song ever. Patsy went on to write many of her own songs but she never equaled the impact of "Cowboy's Sweetheart" again. This song still gets new recordings every time a girl wants to break into the music business and can yodel, take for instance Suzy Boggus or Leann Rimes.

The other female writer is Louise Massey who held sway of the WLS Barn Dance for many years with her family group which was known far and wide as Louise Massey and The Westerners. Another member of the Massey Family was Curt Massey who carried on the show business tradition as the musical director of "Green Acres" and it's off-shoot, "Petticoat Junction". Louise wrote one of the greatest western songs ever, called "My Adobe Hacienda", which has been recorded by everybody who has cut a western album and is still being recorded today.

We talked about a few female country and western song writers and there are more that we probably should have included, maybe we can do this again for a few others that we missed.

As a footnote we would like to add that there is a Cindy Walker CD available from Cattle Records in Germany and another one planned by the British Archive of Country Music. There is a Louise Massey CD available from both Cattle and BACM, and also Patsy Montana from both these outlets. Again I want to commend these small companies for filling a void that the large firms cannot or will not fulfill. Those of us who yearn for the great music we heard in our younger days are having our wishes fulfilled. British Archives have reissued almost two hundred of these CDs and Cattle Records the same, including their vi-

nyl albums and now their CDs. In addition to that we have Bear Family in Germany with their tremendous box sets, Jasmin in England and the occasional one from various firms in the U.S. Now we have Heritage Music in Canada who are issuing out Barn Dance product, as well as a lot of Canadian pioneers out of their catalog, we hope to have news of some more exciting things to come. Stay Tuned.



Louise Massey

**BARN DANCE
SOUVENIRS**

- Souvenir Mugs - \$ 5.00 ea.
 - CD - Vol. 1 \$15.00 ea.
 - CD - Vol. 2 \$15.00 ea.
 - CD - Vol. 3 \$15.00 ea.
 - CD - Vol. 1, 2 & 3 \$40.00 set
 - Cassette - Vol. 1 \$ 6.00 ea.
 - Cassette - Vol. 2 \$ 6.00 ea.
 - Cassette - Vol. 3 \$ 6.00 ea.
 - Souvenir 1997 Calendar \$ 5.00 ea.
 - Barn Dance Logo T-Shirts (gold logo on blue only)
 - Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL \$10.00 ea.
 - NEW "Heywood Family Three Generations" CD \$15.00 ea.
 - NEW Al Cherny CD - "Live / The Lost Recordings" \$20.00 ea.
 - NEW Eleanor & Graham Townsend CD "The Talented Townsends" (36 unheard recordings) \$20.00 ea.
 - Best of The Barn Dance CD \$20.00 ea
- All purchases include GST.*

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BARN DANCE**

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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 Music Memories

as compiled by Lynn Russwurm



Eric and Johnny and The Lincoln County Peach Pickers—from The Main Street Jamboree in the early fifties.



Hillybilly Jewels - Joe Brown, Vivian Brown, Rhudy Stewers and unknown person, from The Main Street Jamboree in the early fifties.



The Ray Little Show - Tex Emery, Joe ??, Roy Little, Ann Little and Sonny. Appeared many times on Don Messer's Jubilee.

Really Bad Country Titles

(obviously written by men)

- * If You Can't Live with Me, Why Aren't You Dead
- * If You Want to Keep the Beer Real Cold, Put it next to my Ex-Wife's Heart

The 10th Annual Barn Dance Campout Weekend and Jamboree

May 25, 26, 27, 2007

at the Blyth Arena Complex and Camp Grounds.

A weekend of bluegrass, main stage jam, silent auction, raffles, Barn Dance Show and Dance, Sunday morning country gospel church. For complete details, see:

www.thebardance.ca

Registration forms available February 2007 by writing to:

Box 68, Wingham, Ont.
N0G 2W0

R.V., Trailers and Camp Sites are limited, so please make your reservation soon to avoid disappointment.

LOOK FOR THE YELLOW VESTS

If you need information at this year's Blyth Jamboree, just look for our volunteers in the yellow vests. They'll be more than happy to help you out.

COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown

(Toronto and surrounding area)

- * **GRANT CARSON BAND** - schedule is Apr. 15 Fonthill Legion, open mic country dance 2 to 6; Apr. 28 Waterdown Legion Sat. night dance 8 to 12; May 20 Fonthill Legion 2 to 6; May 26 Dunnville Legion, spring dance 8 to 12. 905-680-4244. E-mail: svaughan@cogeco.ca. www.grantcarsonband.homestead.com
- * **Bluesky Bluegrass Jam Sessions**, at the Barrie Legion, 1 pm, April 15, May 20 and June 17.
- * **Cathy's Cafe**, 6825 Baldwin St. N. (Hwy. 12 & 7), Brooklin; 905-665-4608; Country music entertainment - Monday mornings 9 to 11:30, open mic; Wed., 9 to 11:30 am, open jam, country and blues; Fri. & Sat. night, 6 to 9 pm, featured artists.
- * **Upcoming Jamborees** at Moose Lodge, Lindsay, contact Chef Adams 705-324-1635.
- * **Jamborees** at Erin Legion are the 4th Sunday of the month.
- * **Appearances by Darren Freeman**, www.darrenfreeman.com
- * **Grey Bruce Jamboree Schedule** contact David Cittick 519-364-4284.
- * **Live Jam Nights** Bluegrass, Foal & Acoustic, every Monday, Man of Yorke, 11 Mill St. E., Tottenham, 905-936-4486.
- * **Open Mic** every Thursday 8 pm, Groundswell Coffee House, 96 York St., W., Alliston, 705-434-0873.
- * **Rosemont Community Centre** presents jamborees the second Tuesday of the month at 7 pm.
- * **Nobleton Old Tyme Dance**, first Friday of the month, Oct. to May, Nobelton Community Hall, 8 to 12 pm. Music by the toe tappin fiddlers, April 6 and May 4. Info contact Phyllis at 905-853-6338.
- * **Come and Dance** at Schomberg Community Centre, 251 Western Ave., Schomberg (Hwy. 9 & 27, off Main St.) April 27.
- * **Shelburne Muskies** present jamborees the second Sun. in April and May, upstairs in the Town and Country Room, Shelburne Arena at 1 pm, 200 Fiddle Park Lane, featuring Greg

Holms as emcee. Hot meals available.

* **Michel's Place**, (formerly Sandy's Place), Weston Rd. & Lawrence, open mic jams, 2 to 6 pm Sundays.

* **Old Tyme Jamboree**, Dundalk Legion Br. 285, 1 pm, Apr. 22. Info 519-923-3406. 50th Annual Square Dance competition June 22, 23 and 24.

* **Jamborees** - Warminster Legion, first Sunday of the month 1 to 5; Penetang Legion, second Sunday; Elmvale Legion, third Sunday; Maple Valley, Lafontaine, second Sunday.

* **Upcoming appearances** contact Bill Beattie at billbeattie@sympatico.ca

* **Live country entertainment** every weekend at The Dynes Country Tavern, 337 Beach Blvd., Hamilton. 905-549-2588 or thedynes@sympatico.ca

* **24th Annual Tottenham Bluegrass Festival**. June 22, 23 & 24. 905-936-4100 or tottenhamchamberofcommerce@bellnet.ca. Three days of bluegrass music hosted by the entertaining and hilarious Mike O'Reilly. It is situated in a natural amphitheatre on the shoreline of the Tottenham Pond. Weekend visitors and campfire pickers will appreciate the comforts of the camp ground. Gospel show on Sunday. Line up includes: Mountain Heart (Virginia), The Steep Canyon Rangers (North Carolinas), The Wells Family (New Brunswick), Eddie LeBlanc & Friends (New Brunswick), Backroad Hometown Bluegrass (Ontario), Silverbirch (Ontario), Concession 23 (Ontario). Children's stage on Sat. and Sun. afternoon. Workshops, kid's program, beef BBQ and children's talent contest.

* **Appearances by Doreen Brown**: Apr. 1, Army & Navy, 765 Third St., Mississauga; Apr. 8, Shelburne Legion Jamboree; Apr. 15, Dundalk Jamboree; May 9, Bolton Community Centre; May 25, 26 & 27, 10th Annual Barn Dance Jamboree Campout Weekend; June 3, Moose Lodge, Brown's Line and Lakeshore, Toronto; June 11, Rosemont Community Centre; June 25, Bond Head Fiddle Club.

* **18th Annual Havelock Country Jamboree** August 16, 17, 18 & 19. Nominated 8 times as one of the top 5 country music festivals in Canada. Includes parking, twin outdoor stages, situated on 15 acre show field, including 4 jumbo video screens and over 100 vendors. Line up includes: Leann Rimes; Terri Clark; Tanya Tucker; Paul Brandt; Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers; George Canyon; Bobby Bare; Prairie Oyster; Dan Seals; Beverley Mahood; Doc Walker; The Cruzeros; The Good Brothers; Bill Anderson and Little Jimmy Dickens; T. Graham Brown; Barnard & Brohm; Desert Heat. Info 1-800-539-3353 or 705-778-3353. P. O. Box 100, Havelock, Ont. K0L 1Z0. www.havelockjamboree.com

* **May 6** - J.B.'s Country Trio (early)

Mother's Day Dance, Cobourg Legion. Featuring Wally Hoard, Binny McIlmoyle and Mike Pollard. 1 to 5 pm. Tickets \$10 /person. House band is Bob McQuaid, Tim Sanders, Andy Schick and Monty Flindall (Miner's Bay) Info call Judy Brown 613-475-5027.

* **May 13**, Benefit for Gary "Gizz" Watt, who suffered a debilitating stroke following surgery at the Community Centre Hall in Baltimore (north of Cobourg on Hwy. 45). Guests welcome. Benefit arranged by Bob McQuaid. Tickets \$10/person.

* **Trillium Jamboree** Hastings, June 14 to 17, and Sept. 13 to 15. Line up includes Reg Benoit, Mike Pollard, Elly Kelly, Joanne Post, George Hillard, Chef Adams, Marlene Leeson, Ernie and Lynn, Kevin Parish, Louise Wright, Stacey Dooling. 705-696-2896 ask for Mike or Hank. www.trilliumjam.mine.nu

* **Maple Leaf Country Jubilee**, 239 Highway 48, Baldwin, at the Sentimental Journey Park. Weekend passes, camping sites available, Grant Carson Band plays both evenings from 7 to 11. Info call Chef Adams 705-324-7884 or George Grey 705-326-8796. Line up in next issue.

* **Sat., May 5**, Come join the fun with live music, Canadian champion fiddlers. Newmarket Meeting Place, 474 Davis Drive. Shindiggin Square Dancing 6 pm gathering; 6:30 pm clinic for new dancers of all ages; 8 pm square dance followed by gala lunch. Tickets \$20. Info call Linda 905-773-1909.

* **Preston Springs Jamboree** July 13 to 15. Located on the beautiful Trent Severn waterway. 705-696-2268.

* **Classic Country Music Reunion** Aug. 2, 3, 4 & 5. Centennial Park in Trenton. Updates in next issue of Country Calendar. Info CCMR, PO Box 53, Blackstock, Ont. L0B 1B0.

* **20th Annual Musicians Corn Roast** Blackstock, Aug. 12. Also motorcycle show and shine. Open to all bikes in memory of Barry Wood and Larry Keppie. Info call Paul Wasson 905-986-0292. A family day of music and fun from noon to 8 pm.

* **Auction Barn Jamboree**, Colborne, Labour Day weekend Aug. 30, 31, Sept. 1 & 2. www.auctionbarnjamboree.ca

* **Maramora Jamboree**, Sept. 6, 7, 8, & 9, 6666 Stirling-Maramora Rd., 1-1/2 miles south of Maramora lights, early camping starting Sept. 3. \$10 per night per camper. Tickets contact Randy or Brenda Warren 613-395-0774. www.maramorajamboree.com

Have a great, safe and country music summer and will see you at our Annual Blyth Campout May 25 to 27 and several of the other functions mentioned above.

BARN DANCE

CORNER

by Peter Saros

While studying the history of radio in Canada and researching the birth of the CKNX Barn Dance for a documentary about the famous program, I have developed a great appreciation for the role radio played in the lives of rural communities. I am fascinated by how it cut through the loneliness that accompanied agricultural life.

In a world shrunk by communications technology, it is difficult in 2007 to relate to the isolation of the rural resident of the early 20th century. Cars, satellite TV, cell phones, and internet give us instant access to local and international current events. They keep us connected with distant friends and family. Today, we are never alone or far from anywhere, even in a country as vast as Canada. In the early 1900's farmers had only far-flung neighbors. Although the seclusion was neither never total nor complete, the farmer's

day-to-day life was a solitary one. Distances mattered. Loneliness was real. Life was more private.

Wireless technology broke through that silence. In a letter written to *Rural Radio* magazine in March of 1938, Hugh and Ann MacNabb of Rothsay, Ontario described their situation: "We live on a ranch in the most remote part of Ontario, Canada. A beautiful part it is and we are surrounded by neighbors, both American and Canadian. Radios are not too plentiful here. I have seen as many as twenty or thirty gathered in our home on a Saturday night to enjoy the Saturday Night Barn Dance."

Radio was the perfect companion to rural life. It brought people together. Rural radio listeners depended on radio for news, entertainment and farm news. It was the door through which the public entered their private lives. The CKNX Barn Dance, The World's Largest Traveling Barn Dance, took things one step farther and brought the excitement of radio to the people as it toured southwestern Ontario.

It was the perfect marriage of community and institution. The

grinding, repetitive, back-breaking farm labor gave way, if only for Saturday night, to the lights and sounds of radio. This mattered deeply to its fans. In a 2005 interview with *The Barn Dance Opera Journal*, current Barn Dance emcee Jim Swan said that the Barn Dance arrived in towns with a message: "this community counts, and therefore, you as part of this community are important."

All of this may not seem particularly newsworthy to anyone who experienced it firsthand, but to a thirty three year-old outsider it is intriguing. The shared sense of experience is beautiful, whether it was as a crowd of thirty people gathered before a radio in 1938 or as a member of the audience at a live performance today. The Barn Dance belongs to the people. That is its ongoing magic and appeal. I encourage anyone with memories or stories of what radio, or the Barn Dance in particular, meant to their lives, to share them in a letter with *The Barn Dance Opera Journal*.

And as Earl would always say ...
THE SHOW MUST GO ON.

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