

# The Barn Dance Opera Journal

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The Barn Dance Historical Society Inc.

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Winter Edition

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## PAUL WEBER – True to his Country Roots

by Grant Heywood

If you missed the October "Timeless Treasures" Barn Dance show at the Heritage Theatre in Wingham last fall ... well you missed one of the best traditional country performances of the year.

The lineup included Randy Satchell, Crystal Gage, Mike Eedy, Stacy Lee, Shane Guse, Sue Weber (Bell) and her brother, Barn Dance pioneer award winner Paul Weber. The audience was treated to 34 classic country songs performed in true traditional country style. There was no doubt that Paul Weber was in his element when he sang a tribute medley to Buck Owens and sang a Johnny and June Carter/Cash duet with his sister Sue. I know how the audience felt that day, because I was part of the back up band and felt the goose bumps every time one of the performers nailed each and every note of some of the best country songs ever recorded. Paul Weber had that same feeling and the audience responded with enthusiastic applause.

Paul Weber comes by country music honestly, since he grew up in a musical family. His dad, Smokey Weber, who passed away almost two years ago, was a country music veteran who was a special guest on many Barn Dances. Brother Mike is a fantastic pedal steel player who toured for years, while sister Sue is still performing with Paul as his favourite singing partner.

Born and raised in the Kitchener area, Paul picked flat top guitar and sang in the family band. Around 1974 he toured back and forth across Canada with Joe Firth, sometimes backing such stars as Dallas Harms, Don Gib-

son and The Kendalls. It was in the early 80's when Paul struck out on his own and formed the group 'Top Hand'. His debut album 'Two Bits of Hurtin' on Boot Records yielded a couple of hits with the album title track and 'Where Beauty Lives In Memory'. 'She's No Lady' was a 1985 single that did well, and one of my personal favourites, 'Whiskey Tears' followed after that.

Paul continued to write songs, get radio airplay, and tour, well into the 1990's. He struggled to keep on top of the Canadian country music scene with his music and videos hoping all the while he might get a shot in Nashville. He certainly had the background, the voice, the songs, the experience ... hell he had it all, but it just wasn't happening. Country music was sounding more like pop music, the money was running out, his marriage was on the rocks, Paul was virtually living a sad country music ballad, like the ones he sings about and it wasn't fun.

In frustration, Paul hauled his band off the road and even tried his hand at Emu farming for awhile.

I am sure there were times when Paul wondered if it was all worth it. No doubt he questioned himself over and over about what went wrong with such a promising career. Making changes in his life and getting back playing with the family was good therapy for the soul. But Paul was determined to keep playing real country music even if he had to buy his own place just for a stage to sing on. That's exactly what he did when he bought the Maryhill Tavern in Maryhill, Ontario. For several years now Paul has been performing every

weekend with his band, the family, and special guests on the corner stage at the old hotel. Over the years Paul has garnered a faithful audience of friends who love to hear him sing, and harmonize with sister Sue as well.

Now Paul can play and sing traditional country music without anyone telling him what to do! His list of guests is like a who's who of country music. Everyone from Larry Mercy, Gordie Tapp, Shane Guse and Stacy Lee, Johnny Burke, steel guitarist, Doug Dietrich, fiddlers Dan Howlett and Carl Kees, and many others. The old wood interior of the hotel provides just the right acoustics and atmosphere for genuine honky tonk, cry in your beer flavoured country music. Ernest Tubb, Lefty Frizell, or even George Jones, would feel right at home on that rustic well worn corner stage.

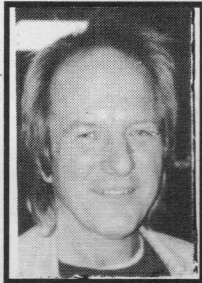
Life hasn't been easy for Paul, but it's not for a lack of trying. He's the kind of person who's experienced many hard knocks, but never been knocked down. You'd be hard

*Continued on Page 3*



Paul Weber, shown here performing at the "Timeless Treasures" show last October.

## The Editor Speaks by Grant Heywood



Well if you haven't guessed by now, it hasn't really been much of a winter. Christmas for many of us, just wasn't the same without a bit of snow to elevate the Christmas spirit or at least a place for Santa Claus to land his sleigh. I know a few folks who played a round of golf just outside of town over the holidays. I guess for some of us, this global warming thing has a few perks. I just hope I won't have to haul out the lawn mower any time too soon.

Since my dad passed away this past fall, I've had a lot of time to dwell on his career as an entertainer and what it meant to me. Even more so, I have acquired a new found respect for his tenacity as a self-promoter. My sister and I took charge in organizing the huge stockpile of memorabilia that my father collected, dating from the 1930's and beyond. Unbelievable stuff like, old Barn Dance and Heywood Family posters, pictures, country music magazines, slides, reel to reel tapes and even several 78 rpm. acetate records.

When my sister started searching through a filing cabinet stuffed with many country music magazines and journals from the late 40's and into the early 60's, I knew there was some plan or reason for keeping it all on file. We started paging through many old magazines and it was interesting to step back in time to read about many of the traditional country stars back then. Most often we would raise a smile and point to an article about Earl Heywood or even the regular Canadian Corral column that he wrote for the U.S. Country Song Roundup magazine. But what really surprised us was that by the time we had literally scanned through over three file drawers full of magazines, it became clear that Earl was in every one of those magazines. Sometimes it was just short item talking about his latest single or even a promo shot with Wilma Lee & Stony Cooper, Hank Snow or even Roy Acuff. Other times it was a full blown article talking about his fan club, songbooks, records or his latest radio interview or show.

I was amazed by the fact that dad had so many recordings from his days with RCA

Victor and Rodeo Records to the Banff and Dominion label as well. We discovered almost two dozen record albums of dad either on his own or on a compilation with other country artists. Lord only knows how many other unfound recordings could be hiding in the 3 or 4 boxes filled with reel to reel tapes. This was becoming a monumental task to say the least! Some of the hundreds of old black and white photos had been catalogued and arranged with captions of the people in the pictures. Pictures from live CKNX radio performances and T.V. shows like Western Roundup and Circle 8 Ranch. The pictures from Barn Dance shows and candid off stage shots of almost everyone who had appeared on the Barn Dance could be found as we combed through the stacks of picture albums. Talk about a trip down memory lane.

As my sister and I looked at each other in dismay over the treasure trove of country music memorabilia, it became increasingly clear that much of this stuff would have to be donated to the Barn Dance Museum in Wingham. So, the next step will be to organize much of what we collected into displays for the museum. Good thing there is a museum committee for that.

After our October Barn Dance show at the Heritage Theatre in Wingham, audience folks streamed across the road into the museum to check out the displays and meet with some of the original performers from the Circle 8 Ranch 'Ranch Boys' T.V. show. It was a great reunion for many including, Ernie King, Hank Bedard, Mary Elliot, Bruce Robertson and Hughie Elder. It was a perfect time to share some memories with those in attendance and view the displays as well as chat about the good old days.

Several people commented on the new displays and how modern the lighting was at the Barn Dance Museum. There were some who intended on bringing friends back so they could take more time to see everything the museum had to offer. With more memorabilia to be added, the museum is fast becoming a noted tourist stop for those interested in our rich traditional country music heritage. The Barn Dance Museum is located in the lower section of the North Huron Museum on Josephine Street in Wingham. Stop by sometime. You won't be disappointed.

Comments? Please contact:

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## 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](http://www.thebardance.ca)

Earl Heywood

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR

Don't Forget to renew your  
Barn Dance Membership for 2007.

\*\*\*\*\*  
★ **The 10th Annual Barn Dance** ★  
★ **Campout Weekend** ★  
★ **and Jamboree** ★

★ **May 25, 26, 27, 2007** ★  
★ **at the Blyth Arena Complex** ★  
★ **and Camp Grounds.** ★

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pressed to find a better country singer who puts as much emotion into every word, each and every night he performs. When Paul lost his dad, Smokey Weber, it was a devastating hurt that just never seemed to heal. The family had lost its leading voice.

Now, once again, it was time for Paul to pick up the pieces and try to mend the ache in his heart and pour his emotions out in a country song. For Paul Weber, life is a country song. But it doesn't have to be sad. He's got

friends, many loyal fans, and family, and some of the best musicians and singers around who still come out to play at the Maryhill Tavern. But there is no doubt when Paul gets up to sing. Everyone knows about his journey, his joys and pain, and if there is a tear in his eye when he's belting out an old standard or one of his own songs ... he means every word that he sings. He continues to be true to his country roots.



*Paul Weber and sister, Sue Weber (Bell), shown here performing a Johnny and June Carter/Cash duet at the "Timeless Treasures" show last October.*

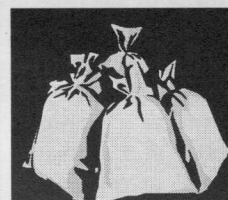


*The Corn Huskers of 1932 Broadcasting from Canada's Cheerio Station CKGW, Toronto, Canada, with "Pete", the Mountain Boy, on the extreme left, and the "King of the Barn Dance", the inimitable George Wade at the microphone, calling one of his famous Square Dance Calls.*

## NEWS & NOTES

A DVD Barn Dance performance of the 9th annual Campout Jamboree in Blyth last year will soon be available for sale. The cover graphics are nearing completion, so hopefully we should have a "LIVE" Barn Dance performance DVD for sale by March.

Barn Dance fiddler, Mike Slauenwhite was visiting in Malaysia late last summer and will be heading back to Malaysia to stay with friends for another six months starting in January. He will be taking along his fiddle to do some teaching while on the other side of the world. We'll sure miss him, and his great fiddle style at the Barn Dance Shows. Best of luck and safe return Mike. See you in the summer.



### FROM THE BARN DANCE MAILBAG

Sept. 3, 2006

Dear Editor Grant,

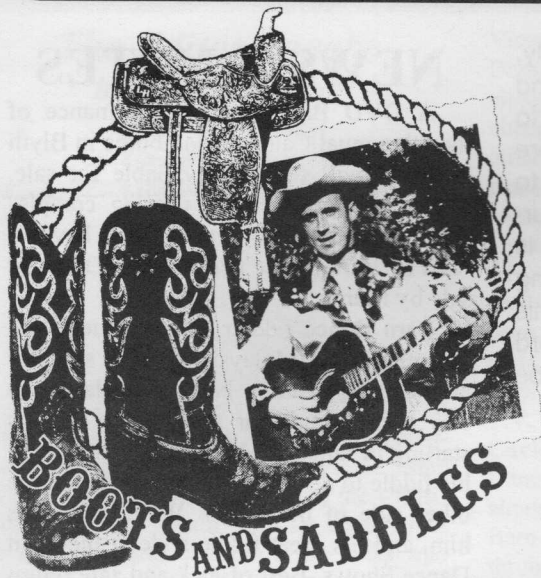
The announcement in Vol. 50 2006, of the Cornhuskers CD got me thinking of that group and I enclose a photo taken from George Wade's book of square dance calls of 1933. Perhaps your readers could identify the ones not listed.

I understand from Tommy McQueston, now deceased, that the only instrument George Wade could play was the Jew's harp, but I also note from George Wade's book that Doc Boyd played the Jew's harp as well as guitar and banjo. I mention this because I learned to play the Jew's harp by listening to the Cornhuskers each week when I was living in Manitoba back in the 1930s. I still have a couple of the Cornhuskers '78 RPM records. George Wade's book mentions that they began their weekly radio shows in January 1928.

I enjoy reading your Barn Dance Journal, so keep up the good work.

Take care, and keep smiling.

Lorne I. Greenwood,  
Box 921  
Markdale, Ontario  
N0C 1H0



by Lynn Russwurm

There are many unsung heroes in this country music business, many of who may make their mark locally but who never receive the full measure of their contributions to the overall picture. One such is John Lucky, better known as "Smilin' Johnnie", a lifelong veteran of Canadian country music. His stompin' grounds are the vast prairie provinces, although he has been known to make inroads elsewhere.

Let's start at the beginning. Johnnie was always interested in music, be it listening or plunking away on borrowed instruments in his younger years. And once he got a taste of performing in front of a microphone, there was no stopping him. Today at the age of 82 he can look back on over 65 years in the entertainment business. He started his first group in 1947, or

I may say his first group started him. It seems Johnnie and his group of young musicians got together and decided to start a band. By dint of being the only one with a car, Johnnie was elected to be the leader. Along with being the leader came all the headaches of putting up with all the separate egos, responsibilities, etc. If something went wrong, of course it was the leaders fault. And remember in those days there were no super highways to travel on and in the springtime it could get pretty muddy on the back roads of Saskatchewan.

One member of the band was a young teen age fiddler by the name of Victor Pasowisty. In the post world war 2 era of the late '40s people were willing to dance and be entertained 7 nights a week, and a Tuesday night dance would draw as big a crowd as a Saturday night dance. These were highly successful years of performing throughout the prairies with Smilin' Johnnie and The Prairie Pals. However, the many nights on the road led to heavy drinking by many of the musicians and in the early fifties, Johnnie finally threw in the towel and the band was no more.

The following years found Johnnie forming and re-forming other bands, doing promotion work with radio stations, and even an attempt at establishing a radio station. Success seemed pretty elusive as Johnnie went through 2 divorces, with all the ramifications of raising 4

children. Things started looking up when he hired a young accordion player to join his group by the name of Eleanor Dahl. In time, wedding bells rang and Johnnie and Eleanor have been a team on and off the road for over 45 years and still perform. They played in almost every one horse town across Canada and were the first and only entertainers to have travelled to the far north to bring cheer to many small communities that otherwise would be neglected. They were treated as royalty in some and much less than royalty in others. Johnnie was never a union musician and at one time was involved in a national furore with the union. He had been booked to perform on the Don Messer Show in Halifax for the CBC and was flown to Halifax from Saskatchewan only to find out that the union would not let him appear on the show. Being the fighter that had kept him going through the years, Johnnie went public and wrote many letters in protest, but it did little toward ending the frustrations he had been through.

The recording end of the business had been unkind to Johnnie until in desperation he produced and marketed a number of albums on his own. In later years, Johnnie and Eleanor produced a substantial number of cassettes and CDs for sale at their performances.

In 1988, they started a series of jamborees at their 40 acre farm near Wroxton, having up to three jamborees on holiday weekends. From 1985 to 1998, Victor Pasowisty was a member of my Jamboree Reunion Band, the same Victor Pasowisty that was a part of the Prairie Pals in the 1940s. I accompanied Victor on a trip which included a stop at one of these Jamborees and I must say what a warm recep-

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Left to Right: Smilin' Johnnie, Eleanor Dahl and Guy Coderre.

Smilin' Johnnie, right, with his original Prairie Pals, from left, Victor Pasowisty, Al Shingoose, Joe Regus and Ray Lazar.

Continued from Page 4

tion we got from Johnnie and Eleanor. This was the first time I had met this fine couple and was certainly made to feel at home in their home.

Johnnie and Eleanor always believe in dressing up for a show and their show is always one where you can bring the whole family to be entertained. Real country music with the accent on comedy is their stock in trade. Sometime in your travels you may have an opportunity to see The Smilin' Johnnie Show and I'm betting you will be glad you did.

Johnnie has just released "The Smilin' Johnnie Story" in book form and a copy can be ordered direct from: Smilin' Johnnie, Box 190-210, Wroxton, SK S0A 4S0. Please include a cheque for \$31.25 for a 240 page soft cover with lots of pictures.

### 2007 Barn Dance Schedule:

Date	Event Name	Place
Sat. March 24	The Barn Dance Show & Dance	Knights of Columbus Hall, Wingham
Sunday, April 1	Barn Dance Society Annual Meeting	Royal Canadian Legion, Wingham-1:30 pm
May 25, 26 & 27	10th Annual Blyth Campout Weekend	Blyth Recreation Complex & Campground
Sunday, Sept 30	Fiddle Convention & Jamboree	Royal Canadian Legion, Wingham
Sunday, Oct 13	The Barn Dance Show	Heritage Theatre, Wingham Town Hall

### 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

### 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.  
 Please include \$3.00 per item for mailing or pick up at Ernie King Music.

# Barn Dance Wins Porcupine Awards

Steve Fruitman, who hosts the popular satellite radio program "Back To The Sugar Camp" broadcasting from CIUT University of Toronto, hosted the 17th Annual Canadian Porcupine Awards recently. The following is a transcript of two of the awards won by the Barn Dance Historical Society and two members, Lynn Russwurm and Grant Heywood.

## SPECIAL APPRECIATION AWARD

*Barn Dance Historical Society, Wingham, Ontario*

This organization germinated in the mind of the late Earl Heywood as a way of preserving the memory of the CKNX Saturday Night Barn Dance. Founded in the early 1990s, the Society has now opened a Museum and has resurrected the Saturday Night Barn Dance.

## GEM OF CANADA AWARD

*A Great Canadian Album Al Cherny - Live: The Lost Recordings*

Restored and Engineered by Mike Striver at Freightyard Studios. Produced by Lynn Russwurm and Grant Heywood for The Barn Dance Historical Society.

Al Cherny died in the late 1980s, so it was quite a surprise to find and remaster the lost recordings. A mainstay on the CKNX Saturday Night Barn Dance, broadcast over CKNX radio, Wingham, Ontario, these recordings are live, natural, and contain some jovial interplay with comedian Cactus Mac, as well as MC Earl Heywood, egging Al on. It's actually the best fiddle album I've ever heard. Mastered just nicely, it's a picture of the past the way you'd want to hear it right now.

# Country Music Memories

as compiled by Lynn Russwurm



1946 Impromptu Jam Session - left to right - Roy Thompson, Johnny Siska and Vince Dietrich. This session resulted in the formation of "The Westernaires", one of the most influential C & W bands, through which came such artists as Lloyd Bank, Mike Slauenwhite, Lynn Russwurm, Earl Fries, Stan Taylor, etc.



The Westernaires, 1949 Edition - left to right - Ken Goebel, Jack Godfried, Vince Dietrich, Johnny Siska and Roy Thompson.

## Michael T. Wall — Personal Tribute to Earl Heywood



**MICHAEL T. WALL** seen here getting advice from his mentor, the late Earl Heywood. Michael recorded and released his song called "The Ballad of Earl Heywood" last year. Michael has been getting a lot of radio airplay on the "Big Al Field" radio show broadcast around the world from Australia where he toured last year. He just recently returned from concert performances in the Tuscon, Arizona area. Originally, he requested paid space to publish the lyrics to "The Ballad of Earl Heywood" in the fall edition of the Journal. This posthumous tribute is a testament to Canada's No. 1 Singing Cowboy.

## THE BALLAD OF EARL HEYWOOD

(Canada's Number One Singing Cowboy)

Now I have a true story that I'd like to tell  
About someone special whom I have know well  
A writer, a singer, historian too  
A true music legend to me and to you.

### CHORUS:

And he's Canada's Number One Singing Cowboy  
He sings the songs we enjoy  
Our friend and our hero, his name is Earl Heywood  
Canada's Number One Singing Cowboy  
Canada's Number One Singing Cowboy

He first sang on stage Christmas Eve, forty-one  
And from that proud moment much praise he has won  
He sang on the Opry, in clubs and dance halls  
Admired and respected by one and by all.

### CHORUS

When he sang on stages and on radio  
His family were part of "The Earl Heywood Show"  
His songs are pure country and down thru the years  
He's made people smile and he's moved them to tears.

### CHORUS

He proved long ago he was no amateur  
(On) the CKNX Barn Dance where he became a star  
But he is still known as a fine gentleman  
A man everybody is proud to call friend.

### CHORUS

Words and Music by: M. T. Wall / F. Herridge. Published by: **MICHAEL T. WALL MUSIC (SOCAN) 1999 PC**, P. O. Box 715, Pickering, ON L1V 3T3

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## COUNTRY CALENDAR



by **Doreen Brown**

(Toronto and surrounding area)

- \* **Appearances by Albert MacDonald and Alex Seaward**—Jan. 6 & 7, Caven's Alley, Mississauga.
- \* **Bluegrass, Folk and Acoustic**, every Monday 8 p.m. at Man of Yorke, 11 Mill St. E., Tottenham, 905-936-4486.
- \* **Open Mic Jam Nite** every Wednesday, hosted by Sean, "Blue Rodeo Bourke", The Happy Hog Roadhouse, Tottenham.
- \* **Open Mic Night** every Thursday, 8 p.m., Groundswell Coffeehouse, 96 Victoria St., Alliston, 705-434-0873.
- \* **Army & Navy** - 765 Third St., Mississauga. 905-274-9981. Features Joe Tucker second Sunday of the month. Call for info on entertainment.
- \* **Appearances by Carl Sheppard**, Moose Lodge, Lakeshore and Brown's Line Jan. 15 & 29; Hensall Circle Jamboree Jan. 14; Waterdown Legion Jan. 28.
- \* **Appearances by Grant Carson Band:** www.grantcarsonband.homestead.com or 905-680-4244. Jan. 21, Fonthill Legion, open mic, country dance 2 to 6; Jan. 27, Sat. Night Dance, Listowel Legion, 8 to 4; Feb. 10, Dance Danceland, Lakeside, 8 to 12; Feb. 18, Fonthill Legion, open mic, country dance 2 to 6; Feb. 24, Waterdown Legion, guest Harold MacIntyre, 8 to 12. Watch for dates March 30 & 31, The Grant Carson Band will be performing with George Hamilton IV. Please check website or call above.
- \* **For Upcoming Appearances** contact Dave Whalen and The Starlite Band, 416-255-8387.
- \* **Shindiggin Square Dance and Clinic** for new dancers of all ages, May 5, Newmarket Meeting Place. Live music with Canadian Champion Fiddlers. Pre sold tickets visit www.shindiggin.com for details. Shindiggin Square Dancing at Bolton Community Centre. Live music by The Dolsons 1 to 3 p.m. Jan. 4 through Mar. 8. Refreshments

served. For details check above.

\* **The Bluesky Bluegrass Club** Sunday Jam Sessions, the third Sunday of the month at the Barrie Legion, 1 to 4:30 p.m.

\* **For Upcoming Entertainment**, contact Gandy Dancer Pub in Cookstown for open mic jams.

\* **Appearances by Doreen Brown:** Moose Lodge, Lakeshore and Brown's Line, Sunday Afternoons; Jan. 25 - Holland Landing; Jan. 21 - Bluesky Bluegrass Club; Jan. 23 - Bond Head Fiddle Club; Feb. 10 - Open Mic, Caven's Alley, Mississauga; Mar. 6 - Thornorton Jamboree; Mar. 13 - Rosemont Jubilee.

\* **Hollywood on the Queensway**, 1184 The Queensway, 416-251-1269, Toronto, www.hollywoodonthequeensway.com presents Robbie Lane & The Disciples, Jan. 7, 14, 21 & 28.

\* **Royal Canadian Legion**, 1240 Woodbine Ave., Toronto, Jan. 13, Country Fever 8:30 pm.

\* **The Newfoundlander**, 472 Danforth Ave., Toronto, presents Darren Freeman, Jan. 6 & 7, Feb. 2 & 2, Mar. 23 & 24.

\* **Casino Rama**, presents Glen Campbell Jan. 23-27 and Tanya Tucker Feb. 23-24.

\* **Dierks Bentley** with show openers Eric Church and Doc Walker play Copps Coliseum in Hamilton on Jan. 23 and at London's John Labatt Centre on Jan. 22.

\* **Sounds like it was a super great trip** to Arizona for Michael T. Wall visiting Jimmy Hookum. What an amazing gentleman. Jimmy must be doing shows, without his both hands. Bless him. "That's dedication to our country music."

\* **Not too early** to make plans for our annual campout in May in Blyth. Always a great time.

\* **Cobourg Legion Jamborees** 1 to 5 p.m. Jan. 28, Feb. 25 and Mar. 11.

\* **Appearances by Reg Benoit:** with Chuck Simms, Jan. 27 - Royal Canadian Legion, Lindsay, 8 to 12 p.m.; Jan. 28 - 1 p.m. Maple Leaf Jamboree, Moose Lodge, Lindsay; Feb. 23 - Country Gospel Acoustic Jamboree, call Reg for details at 905-274-8874; Feb. 24 - with Chuck Simms, RCL, Lindsay, 8 to 12 p.m.

\* **Trentwinds International Centre**, Mar. 4, Lansdowne St. E., Peterborough. Many special guests, 1 p.m. Benefit for MS; Mar. 23, Country Gospel Acoustic Jamboree, info as above.

\* **Maple Leaf Jamboree** by Chef Adams, Jan. 28, Moose Lodge, Lindsay, 1 p.m.

*Wishing all a Very Happy, Healthy, Joyous Country Music 2007 and may it be the best ever.*

### BARN DANCE JOURNAL ADVERTISING PRICES

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*Al Widmeyer was honoured by the Central Ontario Bluegrass Assoc. recently and received the 2006 Dobro Player of the Year Award. Al will be joined by other stellar instrumental award winners when they record a cut on the Central Ontario Bluegrass Award Winners CD. Al had a busy itinerary last year touring with the Dixie Flyers in the U.S.A., and right across Canada with Stompin' Tom Connors. Expect to hear Al on the next Stompin' Tom CD release and likely guest appearances on the Barn Dance too.*

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# BARN DANCE

## CORNER

by Peter Saros

An inescapable sense of change descended once we entered the heart of Huron County farm country. The lingering display of fall color escorting my wife, my five week old son and I from downtown Toronto left us. Here, the leaves had been off the tree for some time. The sun shone with elusive warmth. The crops were in from the fields. The season for fresh produce had come to an end. The stalls advertising cut-flowers stood empty. The black carriages and horses gathered outside the Mennonite prayer houses solemnized the landscape.

Our destination was the October 19th "Timeless Treasures" Barn Dance show at the Wingham Heritage Theater. What was to be my first Barn Dance would be the Barn Dance's first without "Canada's #1 Singing Cowboy" in 64 years. It was an unexpected

eerily pitch-perfect theme to honor Earl Heywood's towering legacy.

The musicians on stage, and my infant son in attendance, represented the full range of Earl Heywood's inspiration for founding the Barn Dance Historical Society: the compulsion of the old guard to do what they have always done and the yearning to pass it on. This musical process was fluid and relentless. Heywood was now part of the ongoing journey of loss. The promise of hope slept in my lap.

Earl Heywood and my son were part of the same beautiful sea of joy and sadness. When I first met Earl, he thrilled at the opportunity to brag about his time spent with a young Bill Haley, his experiences on the Grand Ole Opry and his Donnelly recordings, nearly as much as I thrilled to hear them. I knew he, along with Wilf Carter and Hank Snow, was one of the three big Canadian artists signed to RCA. Beyond that, I had a lot to learn and discover from him. But now Earl

Heywood is gone

Country music has always been able to transform pain and loss into beauty. Watching his son Grant sit behind his drum kit, and his wife Martha man a vendor's table, while emcee Jim Swan eulogized Heywood above a recording of his "Moonlight on the Manitoulin Island," I recognized how life goes on, even if there is no sense that it should. The show, however, as Earl demanded, must go on.

And I hope to be part of it. Until recently, I was not familiar with "Earl Heywood's Canadian Corral" column in *Country Song Roundup* which he revived in the *Barn Dance Opera Journal*. I am now. It is his column space I inherit. I hope to give the pain of Earl's loss away by remembering him and the storied past of the Barn Dance, and use this column to allow country music – its' past and future – to sing beautiful songs for another generation.

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

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