

# The Barn Dance Opera Journal

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Vol. 59 2008

Fall Edition

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## FLASH ~ Hank MacDonald inducted into the Nova Scotia Hall of Fame

by Lynn Russwurm

Hank MacDonald, one of the favourites from the early fifties on the Barn Dance has been inducted into the ranks of his native Nova Scotia Hall of Fame. An award that has been long overdue has finally brought Hank into the hallowed circle of famous sons of his home province. Many others can lay claim to this good natured Nova Scotian as he has lived and performed in many other parts of Canada, in fact from coast to coast.

Now let's see what we can find



HANK MacDONALD

out about this newest inductee. Hank was born in March 1926 in Mulgrave, Nova Scotia, and from there the whole of Canada was his stage. The need to make a living brought Hank out of the Maritimes and into Ontario where he worked at a number of trades including a stint in the Sudbury nickel mines. He somehow found his way to Kitchener, Ontario sometime in the late forties and his own radio show over CKCR radio. Here, he was spotted by Kidd Baker and added to the Kidd Baker show for several seasons of barnstorming around the country including summertime tours of New Brunswick and winters in Ontario with regular radio programs in both locations. In 1952, Hank decided to strike out on his own and formed his band, the Rhythm Rangers for a number of shows and dances. I was part of this band as rhythm guitarist, Don Zeeh on accordion and Reyne Kudrenecky on fiddle. After several months of engagements, Hank was tapped to replace Jack Kingston with Earl Heywood's Barn Dance Band. Here Hank was primarily the bass player but also was a featured act on the Saturday Night Barn Dance. He was a versatile musician who also played a mean honky tonk piano and fiddle, an all-around handy man in a band. Many people still

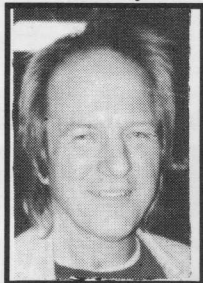
remember Hank with his renditions of Hank Snow songs. Hank had the uncanny ability to sing like Hank Snow, but also to pick his guitar in the Hank Snow style which gave him an authenticity that other performers did not have.

When television came to CKNX in 1955, Slim Boucher came back into the picture and took over the band, and Hank was left out in the cold. He returned to the Kitchener area and back to CKCR where he had his own Hank MacDonald Show on the air every Saturday afternoon. Soon after in the sixties, the bars opened up with country music entertainment and Hank was in steady demand. He went into the Boiler Room in Guelph, where he performed six nights a week for a number of years. This was a favourite place for Maritimers to gather and Hank was a great favourite. Meanwhile his marriage floundered and broke up after two boys and a girl, who are now grandparents of their own. From there Hank performed in many places, some even as a honky tonk piano player. Eventually, another love came into his life and they settled in beautiful British Columbia, working on a fruit farm where he continued to do some picking and singing. From 1985 to 1991 I ran an annual old-timer's reunion in Kitchener and Hank came from British Columbia

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## The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



Summer ended with some of the best weather the International Plowing Match has seen in years. The event was held at Teeswater this year and there were plenty of things to see and do and lots of entertainment. The Barn Dance Show was certainly one of the highlights on the last weekend of the Plowing Match, and it was a great way to end a successful week. Thanks to all who participated and especially those involved in making it all happen.

The 'tented city' as it is sometimes called, is spread over acres and acres of farmland and is quite a sight to behold. I'm sure it looks even bigger from above if you had a chance to take a helicopter ride. The RV and trailer park is also a city unto itself, with hundreds of trailers and motorhomes spread out across 40 or so acres. This is undoubtedly the way to go if you intend on spending some time there and need a home away from home to make it more comfortable.

With the gas prices going up and down (mainly up) like a yo-yo I thought that having a trailer or motorhome would be a bit of a liability. After talking to several people who were camped there for the weekend, I was surprised that most of them wouldn't have it any other way. Regardless of the fuel costs these days,

most folks said that having a home on wheels still allows them the freedom to pick up and go wherever they choose and still have a home base to stay. It makes sense if you figure what you might spend on renting a cottage or hotel room. Owning a cottage is great but doesn't allow you the freedom of the road where you can just pick the place you want to visit or stay. And even with fuel costs it still makes sense although some have said they are maybe going to take shorter trips now or park their motorhome for the week or weekend, such as the Plowing Match, or Blyth Campout Jamboree at the end of May.

There is a real bond amongst most RV people and many love to get together at several of these events across Ontario or beyond just to hang out and vacation with friends. Most of the RV people are retirees and entertain themselves quite often around a campfire with a guitar, and a harmonica and sing along with others. If I had to pick the one thing that most of them have in common it would be, country music. And usually, traditional country music is what they seem to appreciate the most. You can hear it as it drifts on the wind from somebody's c.d. player or at night when they all get together for a jam and a story or two. You might say it has become somewhat of a tradition or even a 'way of life' for so many of these road rambblers. But I'm sure they wouldn't have it any other way.

We're just glad that so many of them attend most of our Barn Dance shows and events throughout the year. 'It just wouldn't be the same

## The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

P.O. Box 68

Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0

Phone (519) 530-8000

(or leave a message)

**BARN DANCE WEBSITE:**

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Simmermaker and Murray Armstrong.

without you' as our emcee, Jim Swan would say. And we hope you will encourage others to come out to a Barn Dance show sometime so they can feel like part of the family too.

Comments? Please contact:

Grant Heywood

5584 Deborah Glaister Line,  
R. R. #2,

Wellesley Ont. N0B 2T0

Phone: (519) 656-2552

E-mail: [heywoods@golden.net](mailto:heywoods@golden.net)

### 2008 & 2009 Upcoming Events:

Date	Event Name	Place
Sunday, October 19	The Barn Dance Show	Heritage Theatre, Wingham Town Hall - 2:00 pm
Thursday, November 13	Barn Dance Christmas	Norgan Theatre, Palmerston - 8:00 pm
May 21, 22 & 23, 2009	12th Annual Blyth Campout Weekend	Blyth Recreation Complex & Campground

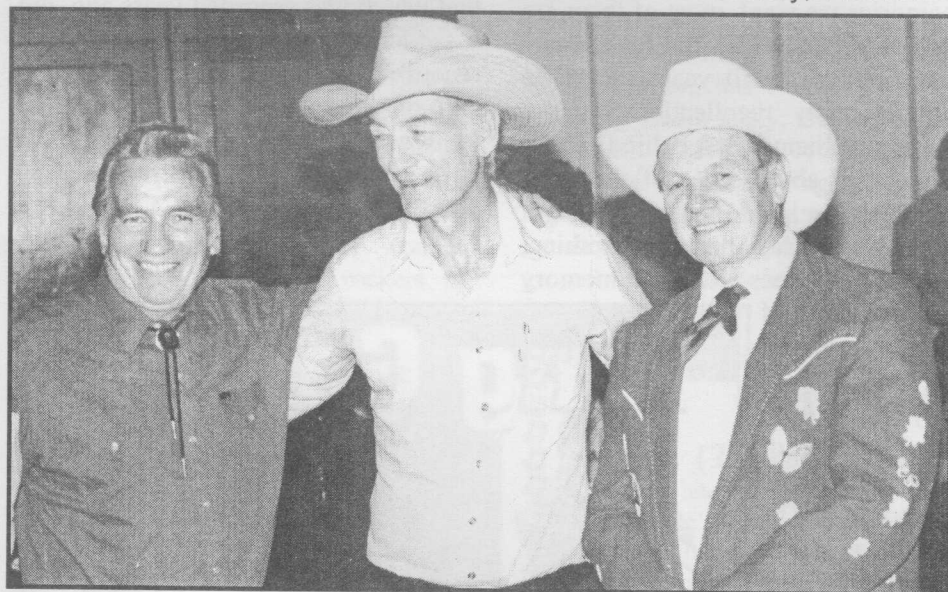
*Continued from Page 1*

on three occasions to be with old friends. On one occasion we had a reunion of the old Kidd Baker Band, along with Hank, there was Don Steel on lead guitar, Mickey McGivern on guitar and Hank on bass backing up Kidd Baker himself, what a joyous time. Hank retired from the fruit farm at age 65 and returned to his homestead in Nova Scotia where he purchased his mother's home where he has lived since. He lost his wife Delores to cancer several years ago and finds his music helps a lot with his loneliness. He performs at local social gatherings on a regular basis in his neighbourhood but has to limit his traveling, due to an angina heart condition which he has lived with for a number of years.

Throughout the years Hank wrote and record a number of songs. He had two 78's released on the Quality label during his period with the Barn Dance. One of them, "The Bachelor's Train" hit No. 10 on the charts across Canada. In 1964 he recorded an album of Han Snow train songs for the Arc label. These recordings were pulled together and released in one album on the Cattle label out of Germany. In 1987, when Hank was in Kitchener for one of my reunions, I took him into a small studio in Guelph and recorded a cassette album which was released by Holborne Distributing, I had Hank sing non-Hank Snow songs on this one and discovered he has a good sound of his own. Just recently, I issued a

CD called "Lynn Russwurm's Canadian Country", which included Hank's Bachelor Train, these cuts were all take from 78's that were recorded over 50 years ago and I've had many comments from people on the clarity of sound on this CD. Hank had Al Cherny on fiddle on this song, along with the rest of the Barn Dance Gang and what a great cut this is, even by today's standards.

Hank has been given a number of awards in recent years, including the Pioneer Award from the Barn Dance Historical Society. This induction into the Nova Scotia Hall of Fame is like the icing on the cake and Hank feels honoured to have received this distinction. At the age of 82, Hank can still belt out a song and on occasion he still does that. If you have the opportunity to hear Hank in your travels be sure to make the most of the opportunity, you'll be glad you did.



*L to R: Hank MacDonald, Stompin' Tom Connors, and Earl Heywood.*

**BOOKING THE BARN DANCE**

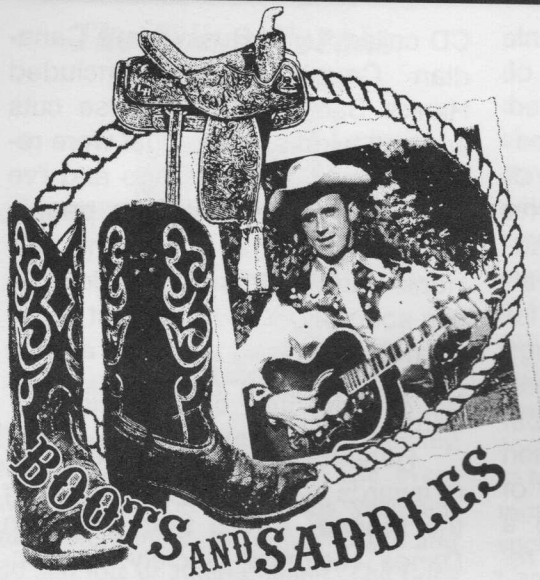
*If you are interested in more information about booking the Barn Dance Musical Production, please write to:*  
 Barn Dance Bookings, P. O. Box 68,  
 Wingham, Ont. N0G 2W0;  
 or call Wayne Otterbein,  
 (home) (519) 235-4783,  
 or (bus.) (519) 235-0559

**BARN DANCE JOURNAL ADVERTISING PRICES**

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  - 1/2 page - \$150.00 plus GST
  - Full Page (inside) - \$275.00 plus GST
  - Full Page (back cover) - \$300.00 plus GST
- All prices are per issue.*

**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 \$20.00 ea.
  - NEW "Heywood Family Three Generations" CD \$20.00 ea.
  - NEW Al Cherny CD - "Live / The Lost Recordings" \$15.00 ea.
  - NEW Eleanor & Graham Townsend CD "The Talented Townsends" (36 unheard recordings) \$15.00 ea.
  - Best of The Barn Dance CD \$15.00 ea
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 Please include \$3.00 per item for mailing or pick up at Ernie King Music.



by Lynn Russwurm

Sometimes it seems to me that things really don't improve, with all the modern technology at our fingertips. When I think of all the good live radio shows that were on the air many years ago, what have we come to? I for one haven't listened to radio in the past ten years, unless for some special thing that might be on. I much prefer to listen to records or CDs and hear the music I like, which by and large certainly is not on the radio. So what have we progressed to? Every once in awhile I run into a good performer that was well known years back, but now has no where to ply his trade. I met such a one at a back yard jam session in Whitby several weeks ago. I was highly impressed by what I saw and heard. His name was Tommy Wade and in the seventies his music was recorded and played on the air. He was front man with the Country Rebels and at that time one of the top ranking bluegrass artists in Canada. He had several albums to his credit and today has mostly retired but can still pick and sing with the best of them. About the only place for good bluegrassers are the summertime festivals that have sprung up, but nowhere to make a living at it.

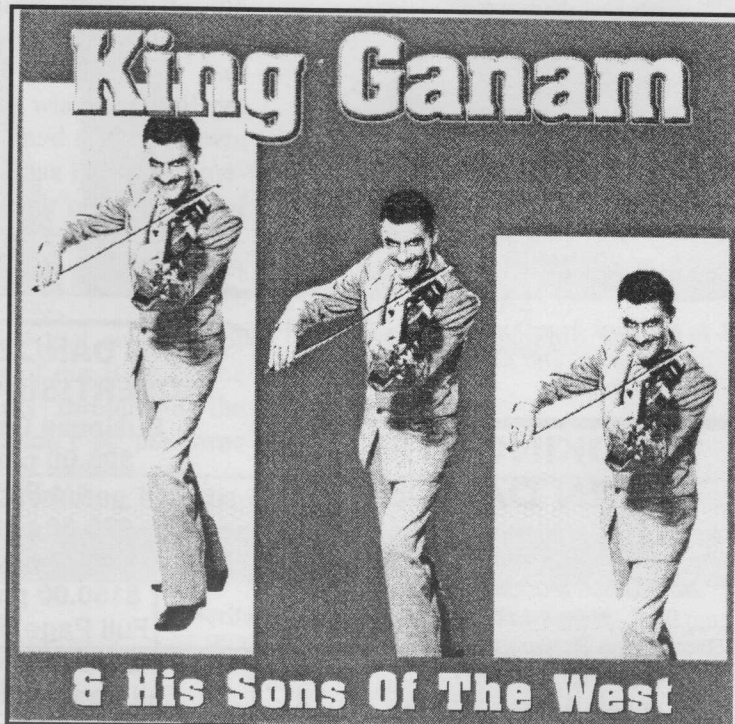
When we come to fiddle players, we had so many here in Canada that were recording, some like Don Messer who had twenty or more albums available. Today there is nothing available

by fiddlers, except those that make their own CDs to sell at their own gigs, you certainly cannot find them in the stores. We had Arc Records with dozens of fiddle albums, Sparton with great Ward Allen albums, Paragon, Marathon and Condor, which are now owned by Heritage Music, The Banff catalog which is owned by Holborne. But these are all in the past, today we have none except like I said the few that do up their own. Fiddle players have their contests to ply their wares, but no permanent record of their

work like the earlier recording fiddlers had, we'll never forget Ned Landry, or Al Cherny, all we have to do is put one of their records on the turntable and we can have all the memories we want, most of them are also available on CD, but for the current fiddlers, in 50 years they'll be only a misty recollection because nothing of them is left behind. That's how I feel about some of the great TV shows we had in the early days of television, today there is nothing, and the early ones are only a memory because most of them were not preserved, as they should have been. I think of the Main Street Jamboree, The Stu Davis Show, Country Hoedown and even the local shows like The Silver Bar Ranch Boys.

I'm involved with several companies in re-issuing recorded material from over fifty years ago, which is not in public domain. I'm trying to preserve that

which was recorded, but suppose nobody had recorded it, it would all be just a distant memory. I have a collection of over 6,000 country 78's and about 1,500 16 inch transcriptions which I'm using to supply these companies for releases on CD. The British Archives of Country Music have to be applauded for their tenacious efforts to keep this music alive, they release three new CDs every month and to date have almost 250 CDs of old time music in their catalog, all over 50 years old. Heritage Music in Toronto has just issued their first CD from my collection, a King Ganam CD. King was one of the greatest fiddlers that Canada has produced, and we all remember him from Country Hoedown, thankfully he also recorded prolifically, otherwise he would also be just a memory. There are others preserving that which was recorded years ago, but it saddens me to realize that nobody is recording some of the music that is still out there today for preservation tomorrow. I guess we'll just have to keep preserving what was recorded 50 years ago.



**KING GANAM - FIDDLE EXTRAORDINAIRE**

CD reissued by Heritage Music, songs selected by Lynn Russwurm.

# NEWS & NOTES

Barn Dance fiddler, Mike Slauenwhite has just returned from being in Malaysia for the past year. A surprise 'Welcome Home Mike' party, was held recently at Paul Weber's Country Bar in Maryhill. Many guest musicians showed up to perform and welcome Mike home, and even Mike got to perform for most of the night as well. As Mike says, 'Boy are my arms tired'. That'll teach him to take an extended holiday.

Since the re-release of Earl Heywood's 'Tales of the Donnelly Feud' CD, orders have been brisk. The new Lucan & Donnelly Museum in Lucan, Ontario will be having a grand opening in the spring of 2009 and the CD will be on sale there as well. Recently, a punk rock group called the 'Black Donnellys' from London, Ont., performed one of Earl's songs from the CD, 'Three Candles in the Window'. The performance was posted on YOUTUBE. This isn't the first time one of the Donnelly songs has been covered. About 10 or so years ago a Saskatchewan punk rock group recorded 'The Wedding of Clubfoot Bill' from Earl's Donnelly album as well. I wonder what attracts these punk rockers to Earl's Donnelly music. It could start a whole new trend.

Barn Dance guest musician & performer, Al Widmeyer, has just completed recording tracks on the new upcoming Stompin' Tom Connors CD. Recorded at a studio near Erin, Ontario, it will include a re-worked version of 'The Hockey Song' on which Al recorded the guitar tracks with his father in-law's (Huey Elder) old Gretsch guitar. No word of a release date yet.

Barn Dance pioneer and historian,

Lynn Russwurm, has been churning out some golden nugget CD performances by various Canadian artists including Earl Heywood, fiddler King Ganam, and recently Jack Kingston. Lynn will be featured on an upcoming radio show interview with Barn Dance Pioneer & radio host Steve Fruitman. The 'Back to the Sugarcamp' show is broadcast from the University of Toronto radio station CIUT and is podcast as well.

It's great news to hear that country star Terry Sumsion has been performing again lately. The last year has been pretty rough for Terry as he has been undergoing treatment for cancer. He was recently a guest performer at Paul Weber's Maryhill Hotel. Pretty hard to keep a good man down. I'm sure he'll be doing more guest appearances in the near future as he's been on the comeback trail.

R.C.A. country recording artist, Buddy Carlton, has been busy in his recording studio lately. Buddy, known for his hit 'Teach Me How To Slow Dance', has been recording and capturing the vocals of many young female country artists on some great 'home grown' CDs. Buddy has also recorded

some 'croonin' favourites himself and hopes to have a Christmas CD ready for release whenever he can get the elusive Grant Heywood to finish some of the rhythm tracks. Hopefully, before this Christmas.

Barn Dance musical director and steel guitarist, Doug Dietrich was once again the designated host for Carter Steel Guitars at the recent Steel Guitar Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. This is the third year that Doug has been asked to host the booth for Carter. The St. Louis Steel Guitar Convention features steel guitarists from around the globe and is one of the biggest in the world. It is usually held around Labour Day weekend at the end of August. Canadian country group, South Mountain have also guested as back up band for many of the top steel guitarists at this popular event over the past few years. As for Doug, he is the proud owner of two steel guitars ... and yes, they are both Carters. And yes ... he really knows how to play them. And no ... he doesn't slice cheese with them.



## WHO WROTE THE SONG?

*(There's a Bluebird on my Windowsill)*

In the late nineteen forties, a Canadian registered nurse, Elizabeth Clarke, wrote 'There's a Bluebird On My Windowsill'. She became one of Canada's first commercially successful songwriters. Canada's No. 1 Singing Cowboy, Earl Heywood, corresponded with Elizabeth Clarke back then and met her on occasion during song writing sessions. She told him the story behind the song months before she died. She said she had been working in the ward of a Crippled Children's Hospital in New Westminster, British Columbia. One beautiful bright morning a tiny bluebird flew down onto the windowsill. She turned to the children in the ward and said, 'There's a Bluebird on the Windowsill'. Feeling inspired, she hesitated for a moment, then repeated the words and almost instantaneously a whole set of words came to her, as well as a melody.

Elizabeth Clarke could neither read or write a note of music. It was Canada's Wilf Carter who first recorded the song and eighteen other artists also followed suit. It received international recognition and was used as the official theme song to help the American March of Dimes in 1950. The Rhythm Pals were the last to record 'There's a Bluebird On My Windowsill'. Elizabeth Clarke wrote many other songs as well but this song most definitely became her signature song.

... And now you know who wrote the song.



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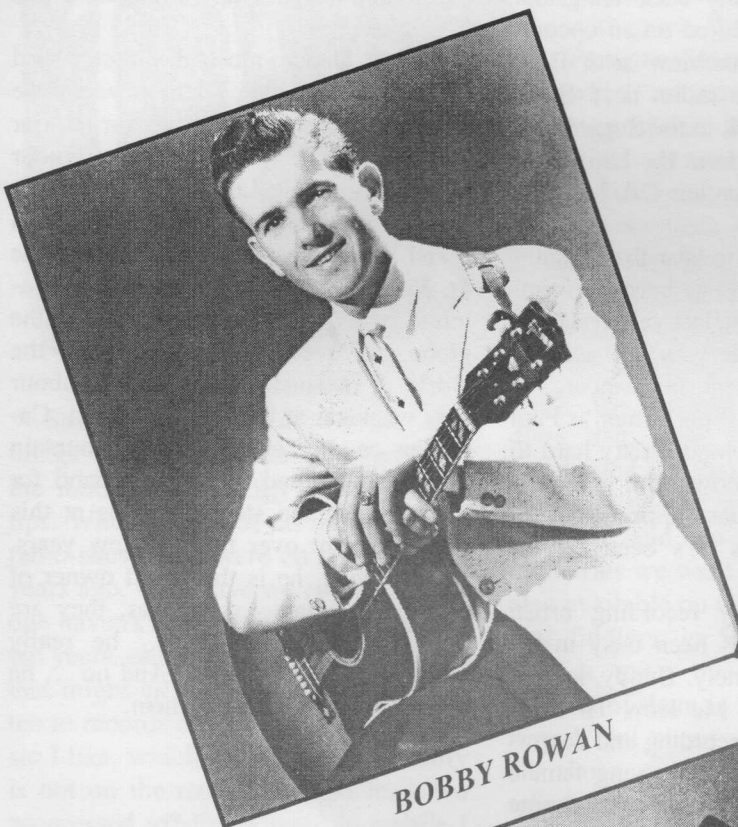


*Ernie King*  
Music (1993) Ltd.

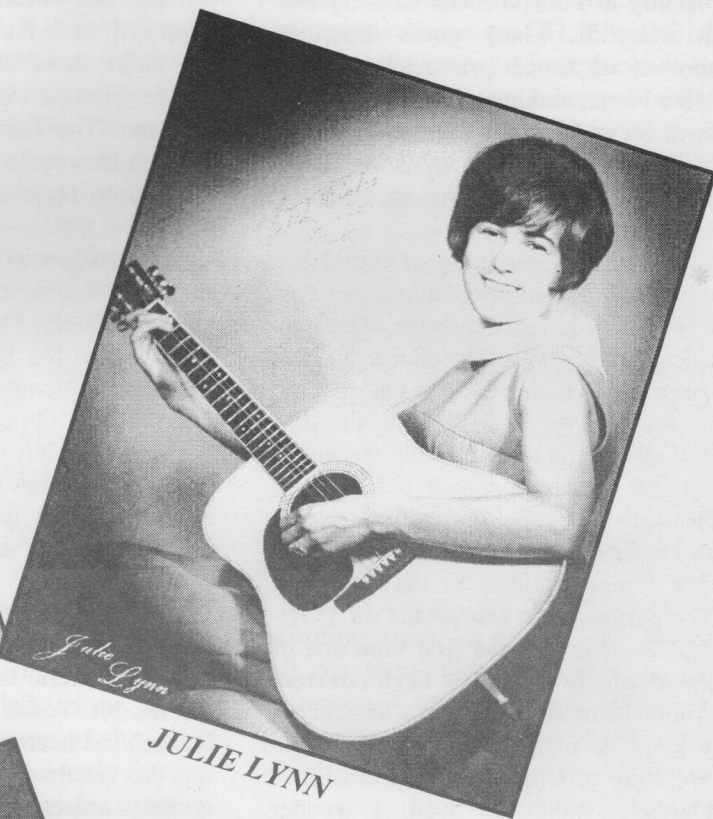
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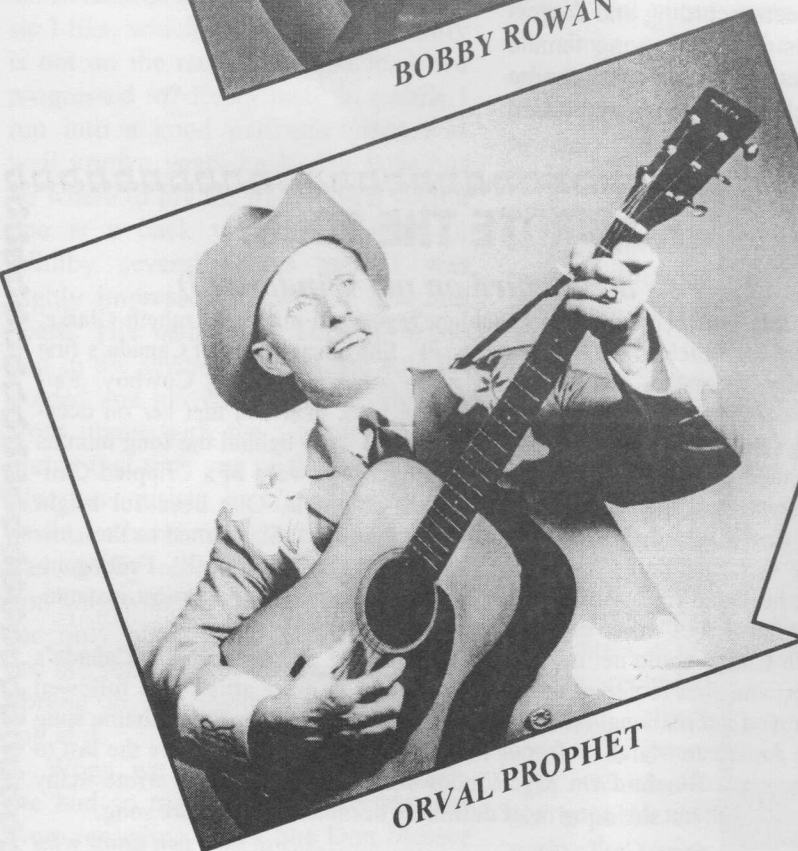
# Country Music Memories



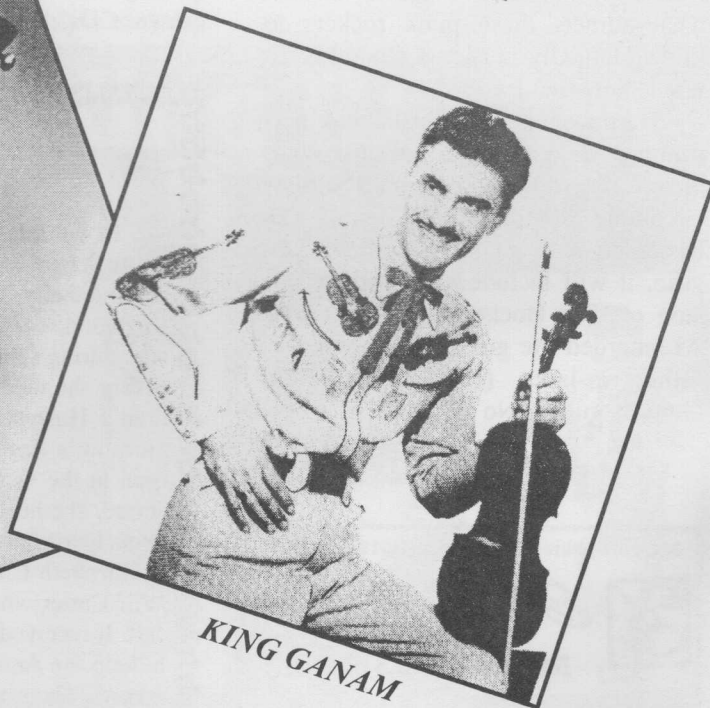
**BOBBY ROWAN**



**JULIE LYNN**



**ORVAL PROPHET**



**KING GANAM**

*as compiled by Lynn Russwurm*

## COUNTRY CALENDAR



*by Doreen Brown*

*(Toronto and surrounding area)*

\* **Oct. 26, Nov. 23 and Jan. 25** - Old Tyme Musical Jamboree - Dundalk Legion, Br. 285.

\* **Oct. 5, Nov. 16 & Jan. 11** - Hensall Circle Jamboree, 456 Hensall Circle, Mississauga, with Cliff Short and the Hensall Circle Band.

\* **Nov. 11** - Caledon East Music Jamboree and Dinner, Caledon East Complex, 1 pm, [www.caledonfairgrounds.ca](http://www.caledonfairgrounds.ca) 905-584-2549 ask for Jim.

\* **Grant Carson Band** is appearing as follows: Oct. 19 & Nov. 16 Fonthill Legion 2 to 6 pm; Oct. 25 Danceland, Lakeside 8 to 12 pm; Dec. 31 Fonthill Legion, hot country style dinner at 6 pm. For tickets call Emily 905-680-4244.

\* **Upcoming shows** for 10 year old cowboy sweetheart - Oct. 12 Norwood Fair; Oct. 18 Chesley Community Centre 6 to 10 pm; Nov. 8 Hometown Jamboree, Napanee 7:30 pm Nov. 20-23 I believe in Christmas, Gibson Centre, Alliston 7:30 pm. [www.myspace.com/naomiebristowmusic](http://www.myspace.com/naomiebristowmusic)

\* **Appearances by Doreen Brown** - Moose Lodge, Brown's Line and Lakeshore, Sunday afternoons 4 to 8; Warminster, first Sunday of the month; Holland Landing, 4th Thursday; Bond Head, 4th Tuesday; Old Time Jamborees in Town and Country Room, Shelburne Arena with hot meal, Nov. 9.

\* **Upcoming Auction Barn Jamborees** - Jams / dances at Cobourg Legion - Oct. 4 dance 8:30 to 12:30; Oct. 19 Jam 1 to 5 pm; Nov. 23 Jam 1 to 5 pm; Dec. 31 New Year's Dance; Jan. 11 Jam 1 to 5 pm.

\* **"Calico Creek"** - with Barry Brooks fourth Sunday at Mactier Legion.

\* **Dance to the music of The Dolsons** - fourth Sunday at the Erin Legion. Dance with guests.

\* **Rosemont Fiddle and Square Dance Club**, second Tuesday of the month. Contact David Aspenlieder 705-435-9753.

\* **Appearances by Myrl Blaine** - Hensall Circle Legion the last Friday of the month, pub night; shows at Little Bit of Home Pub and Grill, 2961 Lakeshore Blvd. W, Etobicoke, 416-253-4416 and Tee and Tee's Sports Bar and Grill, 847 Brown's Line, 416-434-0252.

\* **Appearances by Johnny Burke** - Oct. 19 Victoria Hall, Cobourg, 4 pm; Nov. 2, Johnny Burke and East Wind, Haliburton, 2 and 7 pm shows. Phone 705-455-9177; Nov. 22, Johnny Burke and East Wing with George Hamilton IV, Haliburton.

\* **Appearances by Kiley Joe Masson:** e-mail - [kileyjoe.com](mailto:kileyjoe.com).

\* **Sher A Tune Sounds presents:** The Baltimore Country Jamboree at the Baltimore Arena and Community Centre, Hwy. 45, 6 km north of Cobourg, turn at Community Centre Road. Nov. 2 and 30, Jan. 4, Feb. 15, Mar. 1 and April 19, with featured guests and open mic (3 songs)

*A little early, but wishing everyone a wonderful Christmas Season and super country music and Happy 2009. Thank you always for supporting our country music.*



*Naomi Bristow from Beeton, Ontario is seen entertaining the IPM crowd with her amazing yodeling talents. The Barn Dance did a two hour show at the International Plowing Match in Teeswater. Along with MC Jim Swan and the Barn Dance Show Band, the show also featured performances by Bonita Mercer, Randy Satchell, Hugh Elder and IPM Entertainment Chairman Jack Hackett.*

## BARN DANCE CHRISTMAS SHOW

*Come join the Barn Dance to get a musical start to your Christmas season!*

**Thursday, November 13, 2008**

**8:00 p.m. at the Norgan Theatre, Palmerston**

Master of Ceremonies - Jim Swan & The Barn Dance Show Band  
Paul Weber - award winning singer, songwriter & recording artist

Betty Beer - singer & songwriter from Hensall

John & Geneva Heaman - well known singing duet and Barn Dance regulars; ventriloquism with John's buddy Wilbur McDuff  
Brontae Hunter - 8 year old singing sensation from Kincardine; youth winner at Ontario Open Singing Contest

Tickets available at Norsco Sports 519-343-2075; Martin's Home Hardware 519-343-2100; Capri Hair Styling 519-343-3021

**\$20 in advance; \$25 at the door**

## BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

"I'm trying to leave an impression on the younger people that are coming along today, to inspire them to research some of this music. I think they can be influenced as long as we encourage them to go back and listen to some of this," said country singer Patty Loveless.

The music the twenty-year veteran of the Grand Ole Opry is referring to are the songs of her childhood found on her latest album, *Sleepless Nights*. The record is a collection of classic country songs that have long been anchored in her Kentucky coal-mining bones. Loveless grew up playing these same songs as part of a duo with her brother. This is no romantic nostalgic trip down memory lane. It's the real deal, done right.

The timing couldn't be better for a primer of classic country tunes for the current crop of Nashville stars. The charts continue to be dominated by

either young stars bereft of significant life experiences or pop artists with questionable country credentials. Either way, Loveless has selflessly taken up the mantle of elder stateswoman.

A cover album was a prudent decision for the fifty-year old. She knows the challenges an aging traditional country artists faces today. It is telling this record is released by Saguaro Road. No major label would put significant money into its promotion. Although there is still an audience for it, there is no outlet for it. The music would die on the vine.

When the new music of Darius Rucker, Jessica Simpson, and Kid Rock trumps that of Randy Travis, Trisha Yearwood, and Travis Tritt, all is not right with the state of country music. Loveless must also know her versions of such monumental hits as "There Stands the Glass," "Crazy Arms," and "Cold, Cold, Heart" may be the first time artists such as Taylor Swift have ever heard the songs. Period.

Veteran musicians must feel the beautiful burden of passing on sacred

traditions through song. Aging contemporary artists such as Vince Gill and Dwight Yoakam have recorded tribute albums of their own in the past several years. A way of life could be passing and these artist don't want to see it go.

There is a sense of urgency. We recently lost Charlie Walker and Jerry Reed. Loveless reminisces about Porter Wagoner, her first contact in the music business: "I would end up singing the song with Porter when I was just hanging out with him. He'd play the guitar and sing, and I'd sing harmony with him."

The new acts have no less a sense of responsibility in catching what artists like Loveless are throwing. After all, the future is theirs. Country music is if nothing else, a family tradition. In many ways, the music has to be consumed and not just learned. The roots run deep. Think of Merle Haggard introducing a new generation to the music of Jimmie Rodgers and Bob Wills back in the 1960s.

As Barn Dance fans know, country is music about our lives that can be shared across generations. It is a legacy worth leaving.

## COME JOIN US!!

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