

The Barn Dance Opera Journal

Official Publication of:
The Barn Dance Historical Society Inc.

A Not For Profit Organization

Barn Dance Website: www.thebardance.ca

Price: \$2.00 (tax incl.)

Vol. 58 2008

Summer Edition

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Slim Gordon - The Unforgotten Son

by Lynn Russwurm

The above title is an alliteration of the title of one of Slim Gordon's albums, "The Ungrateful Son". There are still many who remember Slim as one of the pioneers of our Canadian country music. To that end our Barn Dance Historical Society presented Slim with a Pioneer Award at the Barn Dance in Kirkton on Sunday, April 13, 2008. This was a fitting venue for Slim to receive his award as he has been a long time resident of nearby Exeter for many years. Now let's go back and find out a few things about this genuine country gentleman.

Born Murray Gordon Lewis in the year 1926 in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, he formed his first band at the age of fifteen. Through a job transfer he relocated to Hamilton, Ontario in 1947 and immediately began to make some noise as an entertainer and song writer. He auditioned for Radio Station CHML with his band when the station first toyed with the idea of starting a Saturday night jamboree. However the time was not right and nothing came of it. Slim continued working as an entertainer until 1952 when the Main

Street Jamboree officially took form and Slim was among the first to appear on the show along with the Hillbilly Jewels, Maurice Bolyer, Jack Kingston and Gordie Tapp.

In 1953 Slim booked a two week gig at the Horseshoe Tavern in Toronto that stretched into a full 34 weeks. Slim decided to take a two week vacation before resuming his career at the Jockey Club in Hamilton. The vacation ended up in Nashville where Slim took in the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday night. Here he met old friend Hank Snow who gave him a note to introduce him to the Ernest Tubb Midnight Jamboree. This note got Slim on the Jamboree where he was backed up by The Drifting Cowboys. Slim sang one of his own songs and knew he had to leave immediately to hit the road back to Hamilton for his Monday night gig. As he was about to leave he was approached by a man who told him how much he had enjoyed the song and praised him for his unique approach to the song. He told Slim he had a recording company and wanted both the song and Slim. He said come down to Memphis tomorrow and we'll cut 8 sides with you. He said he had been recording R & B songs but wanted to get into country music. Well, Slim had to decline as he had a signed contract to fulfill back in Ontario on Monday night. The man's name - Sam Phillips, his company was Sun Records and we all know about Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins and what happened to them. Talk about a missed opportunity for Slim Gordon.

Sometime in the late fifties, Slim's marriage that had produced two daughters fell apart and in 1957 Slim relocated to Oshawa as work in Hamilton had gotten scarce, the Main Street Jamboree had folded and a change of scene seemed advisable. In Oshawa, Slim connected with Radio Station CKLB to go on air as a

disc jockey. This gave him the opportunity to run Sunday night shows at the Red Barn, where he brought in name entertainment every week. At one point he opened a record shop and began promoting other shows. He continued with his song writing and saw two of his songs, "Pistol Packing Preacher" and "What A Waste of Good Corn Likker" become something of standards with numerous recordings of both songs. In fact both are still being recorded today by bluegrass bands; Mac Wiseman recorded both along with several other Slim Gordon songs.

In 1966 Slim remarried, this time to a girl from Exeter and by 1971 life on the road lost its' charm for Slim and he retired from the music scene and began a second career as an insurance company representative.

I first met Slim on the Main Street Jamboree in 1955 where his band backed up myself and my wife on several occasions as guests on the show. In 1987, I invited Slim to take part in our Jamboree Reunion at Bingeman Park in Kitchener, even though he had retired from the music business some years before. My wife and I spent some time with Slim after the Barn Dance in Kirkton and found him to be a well informed gentleman and that he was quite willing to share his career with us.

A few highlights he shared with us included the fact that he was honoured as Mr. DJ USA while he was on Oshawa radio. He is the only Canadian who has received this honour and it included a trip to Nashville and a broadcast over WSM. I also learned that his oldest daughter, Shirley entertained with him for a number of years from age eight on. Shirley appeared with him on the CKNX Barn Dance on one of his guest appearances and was also featured on one of his three albums.

Slim shares with me the memory of

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SLIM GORDON

The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



Our 11th annual Blyth Barn Dance Campout Jamboree keeps growing and will likely be the most successful to date. Wow, what a weekend it was, with perfect weather and a whole bunch of new folks attending both the Barn Dance Campout as well as the Ontario Singing Contest at the Blyth Theatre. I try to talk to as many people as I can and I am always thrilled when I hear so many folks say "We've been coming every year and that's the best show we've seen yet".

As I have always said, it takes a lot of weeks and months of preparation to stage such an event, but it just wouldn't happen without our campout director Bill Simmermaker and everyone on the Barn Dance Historical Society board of directors as well as many, many, untiring volunteers. We can't thank you enough for helping out and making this year a huge success.

Also, many thanks to local organizations and those at the Ontario Singing Contest for helping to build this event into a super weekend of camping, jamming, fellowship, and great country music. Of course it just wouldn't be a country music weekend without musical director, Doug Dietrich, and all of the musicians and entertainers who performed. And last but not least, a BIG THANK YOU to all who attended and came out for a fun weekend of music and entertainment. You help to keep the 'spirit' of the Barn Dance and traditional country music alive.

Our Friday night Bluegrass Show and Jam and Sunday morning Gospel Church service and show, is almost becoming as popular as the Saturday night Barn Dance Show. Looks like we're going to have to get something happening for the Friday afternoon people looking for entertainment as well. Something we'll obviously work on to

prepare for the 2009 Campout and Jamboree weekend.

Everyone is feeling the skyrocketing price of gasoline these days, which makes it difficult for a lot of people making plans for holidays and retirees who enjoy events such as the Blyth Campout weekend. I think most of us feel that the price of fuel is not about to get cheaper anytime soon and so everyone is re-thinking what will take priority. No doubt, a lot of folks will still be travelling, but will likely be taking shorter trips and staying a little closer to home. That just makes common sense and maybe will be good for a lot of rural events, attractions and fairs.

If I noticed one thing over the course of our campout weekend, it was how many people knew each other and kind of 'hung out' with each other as if they hadn't met in quite a while. There were also those who met new friends and got to share the joy of music and laughter. It never ceases to amaze me how we tend to share a common bond when we gather together for a 3 day event like the Campout Jamboree. Maybe it's the love of traditional country music songs we long to hear again, or just the magic of being in one place where we can visit once a year with each other and pick a few tunes, tell some jokes, exchange pictures of grandkids, or even great grandkids, or just catch up on some of our fondest memories.

I know when our Barn Dance emcee, Jim Swan hits the stage it's like seeing an old friend. Jim makes you feel at home and brings the show alive with his onstage personality. He makes it personal, and makes no bones about his grassroots in Bright, his days at CKNX and basically just loves to revel in the kinship of everyone gathered there for the show. When Jim says "How many people have ever been to the Barn Dance before?" there is always a large show of hands. And when asked "How many are experiencing their first Barn Dance tonight?" there is also a show of hands, although maybe not as many. But it's this kind of connection from the past that Jim is able to communicate with the audience on a 'friendly neighbour' basis. That's what makes people feel so comfortable as they anticipate the next Barn Dance pioneer to perform onstage or maybe a

The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

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(or leave a message)

BARN DANCE WEBSITE:

www.thebardance.ca

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Shirley Russwurm, Peter Saros, Bill
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young 'up and coming' talent that they know from the next county. That's what makes the Barn Dance so special

When those fiddles start the 'Down Yonder theme' and roll right into 'Maple Sugar' you know you are guaranteed an evening of down home traditional country music and entertainment the way you remembered it when it was broadcasted every Saturday night on CKNX radio. And many of the singers, musicians and performers became just like they were old friends. Old fashioned you might say.....maybe, but it's a past that we remember so well. Plain and simple.

Hope to see you at the next Barn Dance.

Comments? Please contact:

Grant Heywood

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2008 Upcoming Events:

Date	Event Name	Place
Saturday, June 28	Barn Dance Show / Dance	Stratford Rotary Complex
Sunday, October 19	The Barn Dance Show	Heritage Theatre, Wingham Town Hall
Saturday, September 20	The Barn Dance Show	International Plowing Match, Teeswater 1 p.m.

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Fred Roden, who I've often mentioned in my column as an unsung hero who did so much for so many and received so little in return. Today, his is forgotten by the people at the Canadian Country Music Association, the very people who should have honoured him a long time ago. Fred had a country music record store in Toronto and created many venues to help the young country musicians of the day in anyway he could. Slim tells me when he first came to Ontario, Fred was there to help him and guide him. The first time Slim went to Nashville, Fred gave him many contacts, this is what Fred was like, always helping someone.

Fred lost his wife a few years ago and now lives a quiet life in Exeter with his memories of an interesting and fulfilling career in country music, a real gentleman and I consider, a real friend.



*Slim Gordon and the Country Jewels.
L to R: Bill O'Boie, Claudette Lefebvre,
Slim and Lucky Trumaine.*



Boy, that Mary Elliot Huyzen must be a persuasive person. Besides being a great person with a big heart and a sweet voice, she was able to do what many of us have attempted to do for several years now. Mary was able to coax Sharon Strong, one of the great voices of the Barn Dance to do a couple of gospel songs on Sunday morning. It was a real pleasure to hear Sharon's voice again and to know that she still has one of the best singing voices I've ever heard, and by the round of applause it was apparent that everyone else felt the same. Here is a picture of Sharon at the Sunday morning show. We can only hope that she returns again real soon.

**BARN DANCE JOURNAL
ADVERTISING PRICES**

- Business Card Size - \$25.00 plus GST
 - 1/4 Page - \$75.00 plus GST
 - 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.*

**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

**WHO WROTE AND
PERFORMED THE SONG?
(Bouquet of Roses)**

In memory of Eddy Arnold, who died May 8, 2008

The two big entertainment trade magazines, Billboard and CashBox, had much to do with building a career for many early country stars. Both magazines first started the 'Top Ten' ratings system on radio in 1948. From 1948 to 1963 Eddy Arnold, (the Tennessee Plowboy), led all country performers with a total of ninety two top ten tunes, twenty one of which were chart topping number one hits. Not unlike Patsy Cline, Eddy was able to garner successful airplay on both pop and country charts. But it was Eddy Arnolds first great hit, 'Bouquet of Roses' that created a chain reaction.

Almost every songwriter in the business came up with a song based on roses, but none were quite as successful as 'Bouquet of Roses', written by Nelson and Hilliard. Once it became a smash hit, it opened the door for more of their song material to be recorded, especially for Bob Hilliard who also wrote with legendary Burt Bacharach. Nashville paid its respect to Eddy Arnold, inducting him to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1966. Eddy retired from performing in 2000 and concentrated on his real estate enterprises.

Unfortunately, Eddy passed away on May 8th of this year just two months after his wife Sally died, and just before his 90th birthday. His smooth voice will always be remembered on songs such as 'Make the World Go Away' and 'I'm sending you a big 'Bouquet of Roses'.

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



by Lynn Russwurm

Our country Jamboree Campout, once again has come and gone. Each year we're getting an increase in attendance, which forebodes a long life for our annual event. Each year there is a surprise or two in store for us and to me the surprise took place during the "open mic" jamborees on both Friday night and Saturday afternoon. The name of the surprise was Naomi Bristow, a little 11 year old, with a mature voice complete with the ability to yodel with the best. Along with this awesome ability, she had the poise of a real professional which really manifested itself when her second song on Friday night was completely ruined by the back up band who didn't know the song "I Want to be a Cowboy's Sweetheart" and didn't have the ability to pick it out by feel. And yet, this little lady carried on like a true professional and carried it off in spite of the band. I foresee a great future in store for Naomi Bristow if she keeps her feet on the ground, and continues in the direction she seems to be heading. To my surprise she already has a CD available, done up with professional musicians like Steve Pittico and Don Reid from South Mountain, which showcases her voice to a T. It is tastefully done, with the little lady's vocal up front, instead of buried behind a wall of unnecessary sound as so often happens in the recording studios. My hat is off to Naomi Bristow.

While we're on the subject of yodeling, I'm going to belabour the subject a little longer and touch on a few of our own Canadian yodelers, who through the years have kept this almost lost art alive. The first that comes to mind is Terry Parker. Terry was a regular on the Barn Dance for

a short period of time around 1957 and in retrospect was one of the finest all time yodelers. She recorded two albums for Rodeo records sometime after her stint with the Barn Dance and they easily compare with the best that came from south of the border, such as Patsy Montana or Rosalie Allen. Terry came from northern Canada and in addition to appearing on the Barn Dance also made appearances on other shows such as Holiday Ranch. Her whereabouts today are unknown and queries have largely remained unanswered.

When we're talking yodelers, our own Jack Kingston was a yodeler beyond compare. Born and raised in St. Catherines, Jack came to CKNX as the result of a talent contest and proceeded to build a name on the Barn Dance as one of its most unforgettable stars. As part of The Barn Dance Gang, Jack appeared at many venues throughout his career with CKNX, as well as his many appearances on the Barn Dance. While with CKNX, Jack recorded his first 2 singles with Capitol records and in fact was the first Canadian country artist signed by Capitol. He made a well received guest appearance on the National Barn Dance in Chicago, which at that time was one of the top venues with stars like Lulubelle & Scotty, Bob Atcher and many other country music greats. Jack was an excellent rhythm guitarist, and he also played the stand-up bass with the Barn Dance Gang. When CHML in Hamilton was mounting their Main Street Jamboree, Jack was recruited to be the star of the show, where he organized the Mainstreeters, probably the greatest country band ever in Canada with the great Wally Traugott on fiddle, Lloyd Bank on Steel guitar, Roly D'Eon on stand-up bass, Eddie Preston on drums and Maurice Bolyer on banjo, lead guitar and piano, what a line-up. Musicians today still talk about this group. Jack went on to record 3 albums and numerous singles for such companies as Sparton, Arrow and Starday. He even had an EP issued in New Zealand, which is today highly sought after in collector circles. His song "How Far is She Now", a tribute to Marilyn Bell, was in fact a top selling Canadian record.

Jack and his wife Barb spent some

years living in Florida but returned to Canada where they lived in Hamilton and then back in St. Catherines. They raised three sons, the youngest of which has embarked on a country music career of his own and is now living and performing in Las Vegas. A few years back Bobby entered the recording field with a CD tribute to his Dad, where he recorded a complete CD of songs his father had introduced throughout the years, including some yodeling. Jack passed away a few years back after a bout with cancer, but today we still have his recordings to remember this great yodeler by. You haven't heard yodeling until you hear Jack on "Alabama Jubilee", which will be issued on a Jack Kingston CD from the British Archives of Country Music sometime in the near future; I'm looking forward to that.



JACK KINGSTON

High on our list of Canadian yodelers is Shirley Field. She hailed from the West Coast in British Columbia and did her first recording as a duet act with Evan Kemp for the legendary Aragon label. I first got to know Shirley when she traveled the Ontario night club circuit with her own "Shirley Field Show" along with her then husband, Billy G. French. She appeared many times at the Twin Gables in Listowel, at the Hanover Inn in Hanover, as well as at most of the major country music clubs throughout the seventies. When that marriage broke up, Shirley returned to the West Coast where she started appearing at cowboy gatherings and other jamborees, including trips to Avoca, Iowa, U.S., for a major convention that is considered the tops in its field, a week long series of concerts, contests and showcases. She has

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won numerous yodeling championships throughout the years and is showing no signs of letting up. She has issued 4 CDs of cowboy and yodeling music that is a joy to hear, and is now living on a ranch in Alberta with her husband, Fred Frederickson.

This is not to forget yodelers like Wilf Carter, Hank Snow, The Yodeling Ranger and many others that have graced our Canadian stages throughout the years and once again I point out the fact that Canadians have to take a back seat from no one.



SHIRLEY FIELD

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.
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 - Souvenir 1997 Calendar \$ 5.00 ea.
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 - 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.

"Hillbilly Heaven"

It was a joy to have Barn Dance Pioneer, Mary Elliott Huyzen, as director and emcee for the Sunday Gospel Church at the recent 11th annual Blyth Barn Dance Jamboree Campout. Mary was invited to take over from Ernie King who will still be around now and then for support. Mary had requested the lyrics for Mary's 're-tooled' version of Hillbilly Heaven, which was a hit with the near capacity crowd on Sunday morning. Here then is a copy of Hillbilly Heaven, as it relates to the many entertainers of the original CKNX Barn Dance.

I dreamed I was there in Hillbilly heaven

Oh, what a beautiful sight.

I met all the stars in Hillbilly heaven

Oh what a star studded night.

Last night I dreamed that I went to Hillbilly Heaven.

It was all that I imagined it to be.

There were flowers, birds and butterflies

And mansions as tall as the eye could see.

There was water flowing from rivers and streams

Ah this is too good, don't let it be a dream.

There were no tears or loneliness and no one felt pain

The pearly gates opened again and again.

I followed the streets of gold for a way

And then I saw what took my breath away.

Still playing and singing songs that were old

Friends so dear that passed long ago.

With a swing of his arm and a leg kicked in the air

Johnny Brent told the angels now grab a chair.

He opened a show so familiar to me

Something I never thought in heaven I'd ever see.

Then with a voice Johnny shouted loud and clear

From coast to coast people who love country music most.

Coming to you live from Heaven's community center

This is the CKNX Saturday Night Barn Dance.

Loud applause rang through the air as Johnny called each person's name.

First Lucky Ambo and Slim Boucher and they both looked just the same.

Jack Kingston with his big white hat and as always taking his time

Made his way towards the stage and in even heaven yodeling sounds just fine.

I seen Cactus Mac and Archie Mann laughing as they talked.

Len Love on the piano playing with fingers and toes his favourite song the music box.

Geordie Jordan called a Square Dance and made sure you did it right

He would stop the dance and teach you over and over, even if it took all night.

Reg Bitton played sweet music on the accordion and organ,

And standing right behind him I saw my old friends Don and Cora Robertson.

Big Rossie Mann played his fiddle in his sweet simple way

Then he'd sing is song "foolish questions you can hear them every day."

Al Cherny with a smile you couldn't help but see.

Playing the fiddle behind his arm and even under his knee

Hungarian polkas was something new for heaven

And I'm sure by this time even the angels agreed.

Clarke Johnston took to the stage with kilt and shilelagh in hand

Everyone ready to laugh even the band

With a big toothless grin and a HEE HEE HEE

He started singing "Something's always sure to tickle me".

Then on to the stage and all dressed in gold

Earl Heywood began singing the best songs he ever wrote.

Manitoulin Island and the Donnelly's rang clear

No doubt he'll sing them again in heaven year after year.

And then Johnny came back out on to the stage

One more act the show was over for another heavenly day.

Then I heard up next is Mary Elliott ... Mary Elliott and that's when I woke up

But that's OK, cause I am going to be there someday with all of them.

CHORUS

Country Music Memories

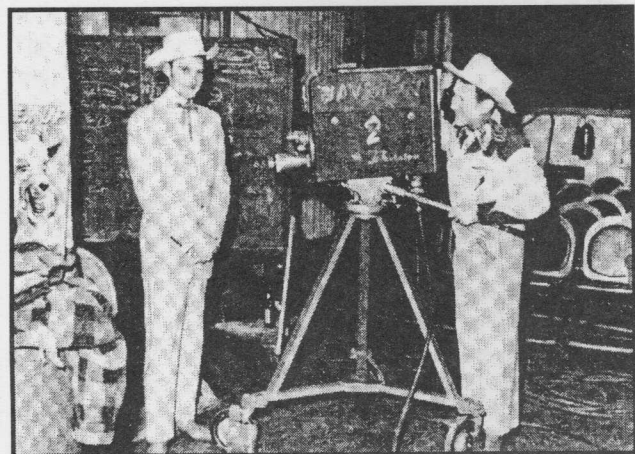
as compiled by Lynn Russwurm



Slim Gordon starred on Main Street Jamboree CHML and Dominion Network.



L to R: Bill Bessie, Ernest Tubb, Slim Gordon and Tommy Hunter, after CBC "Country Holiday".



L to R: Slim Gordon and Pee Wee King while working on WAVE-TV, Louisville, KY.



← Slim belts out one of his country originals over WSM Nashville, Tenn., accompanied by the Drifting Cowboys.



During a performance with Skeeter Davis.



→ After an appearance on WSM with Hawkshaw Hawkins shortly before Hawks fatal plane crash.

COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown

(Toronto and surrounding area)

- * **Belwood Lions** invite you to attend their Jamboree, first Thursday of every month at Belwood Hall. Starts 7:30 pm For info call 519-843-6111 or Bob Lacombe at Lacombe@golden.net
- * **Minden Arena Jamboree** featuring-Cliffy Short with Johnny Burke and East Wind on August 9.
- * **Hensall Circle Jamboree** - 456 Hensall Circle, Mississauga, October 5, with Cliffy Short and the Hensall Circle Band. Other dates in next issue.
- * **Old Tyme Musical Jamboree**, October 26, Dundalk Legion, Br. 285, starts 1 pm. Hot dinner at 4:30. For info call 519-669-2557.
- * **Scott Woods Band**, for upcoming show, call 519-843-3173 or 519-835-3356. Email smwoods@sympatico.ca or www.scottwoods.ca
- * **July 22, 23 & 24** - Preston Springs, Hastings, Ontario 705-696-2268.
- * **July 24 to 27** - Palmer Rapids. 613-587-4683. www.palmerrapids.ca
- * **Flinton Country Jamboree** - August 1, 2 & 3. flintonrecreationclub.ca or 613-336-8354.
- * **July 31, Aug. 1, 2 & 3**, 17th Classic Country Music Reunion, Centennial Park, Trenton. Main stage show Fri., Sat. & Sun. nights. Open Mic. Jam Time. Watering Corral Stage. Sun. AM Gospel show. for more info www.ccmr.ca or call 705-878-3102.
- * **Aug. 14, 15, 16 & 17** - Havelock Country Jamboree. www.havelockjamboree.com or 800-539-3353.
- * **Aug. 21, 22, 23 & 24** - Mapleleaf Country Jubilee, Baldwin, Ontario. 905-377-9940. www.jigourmetcuisine.com?upcomingevents.htm
- * **Aug. 28, 29, 30 & 31** Suvyion Barn

Jamboree, Colborne, Ontario. 905-3 5 5 - 2 1 0 6
www.auctionbarnjamboree.ca

* **Sept. 19, 20 & 21** - Trillium Country Jamboree, Hastings, Ontario. 705-696-2896. www.trillium.mine.nu

* **Upcoming appearances by Doreen Brown:** July 6, Warminister Jamboree; July 13, Moose Lodge, Lakeshore and Brown's Line; Classic Country Music Reunion, dates as above; Aug. 13, Bolton Community Centre, Fiddle Club Jamboree; Colborne Jamboree, dates as above.

* **October 4**, Dance at Cobourg Legion 1 to 5 pm.

* **For appearance by Freeman & Kneller**, contact Darren Freeman at 705-760-9669. or cottingham@cogeco.ca

Thanks to all the wonderful people who came out to our Blyth Campout Weekend of May 23, and to all the volunteers who helped make it such a successful weekend. Also to new members.

Have a safe, happy, healthy and great summer.

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IN MEMORIAM



HELEN OTTERBEIN: Peacefully, at Exeter Villa, Sunday, May 25th, 2008, Helen Dorothy Clara (Hoffman) Otterbein, formerly of Kitchener and Zurich, age 86. Beloved wife of Lloyd Samuel Otterbein. Loved mother of Wayne Otterbein of Exeter and the late Judy Otterbein (2006). Loving grandmother of Jim Otterbein of Exeter, Dennis and Cheryl Otterbein of Mount Forest, Carla and Rob Devore of Brussels. Dear grandmother of Ashley Otterbein, Rileah, and Shealyn Devore, Owen and Kate Otterbein. Dear sister of Erwin Hoffman of Waterloo, and the late Margaret Hoffman. Remembered by her nieces and nephew. Service was held at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Zurich with interment at St. Peter's Lutheran Cemetery in Zurich on May 28th, 2008.

Helen was a member of the International Order of Foresters, E.L.W. of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, and Blue Water Rest Home Auxiliary. She was also a steadfast member of the Barn Dance Historical Society. Without a doubt, Helen was a vocal member and a 'trooper' as a volunteer of the Barn Dance organization. Her efforts and contributions were immeasurable and we will most certainly miss her. Helen was a kind, generous and supportive person and was unwavering to the very end. Her love of music and family will always be cherished. Our gratitude to a wonderful lady who will not be forgotten. The Barn Dance Historical Society wishes to extend our sympathies to her family, friends and loved ones.

NEWS & NOTES

The Heywood Trio, Martha, Patricia and Grant, were pictured on page 4 of the Monday, May 6 Toronto Star. They were shown performing at the recent Barn Dance Campout Jamboree, including a 'write-up' by John Goddard, about the Barn Dance and Ontario Singing Contest held recently in Blyth.

Barn Dance member/musician, Al Widmeyer was recently seen on CBC T.V. while performing 'The Hockey Song' with Stompin' Tom Connors, for the annual NHL hockey awards show.

Michael T. Wall has returned from his 2nd successful tour of Australia late the past winter. Michael was a 'big hit' at the

Tamworth Country Music Festival and had a song written for him, dedicating him as 'Australia's Adopted Son'.

We sure do get a lot of inquiries asking about Barn Dance guitarist George Lonsbury, who is also 1/3 of the Larry Mercey Trio, along with bassist, Al Alderson. We hope to have George back real soon. Until then, guitarist Fred Lewis from Woodstock will be 'pinch hitting' ... or should I say 'pinch picking' as George recovers from a recent illness. George obviously has some dedicated friends and fans and we're all looking forward to his return and that 'sweet pickin' sound' he's perfected and learned over the years from his late dad, George senior.

BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

Sometimes I fear this column reads more like an obituary than anything else. It is not my intention.

My goal is to celebrate the living legacy of the Barn Dance and country music's founding musicians as they relate to the scene today in Nashville. I want to assure that the spirit of the past creatively haunts and inspires the future. Unfortunately, losses like that of Eddy Arnold on May 8 turn everything on its head. For a while the music stops and everything else, if not the world, goes away.

His story and success are as amazing as his music. And it is his music that manages to still leave me slack-jawed at its beauty.

Surprisingly, Arnold is one of those musicians history sort of forgot. One very rarely hears the "Tennessee Plowboy" cited as a musical influence by today's artists. Maybe he isn't edgy enough like Hank Williams or dark

enough like Johnny Cash. Yet his prodigious musical output is second to none. Arnold sold more than 85 million albums and singles. He notched 92 Top 10 singles. *Billboard* magazine ranks him as the most successful country singles artists ever. Not Shania, not Garth, not George or Patsy. Eddy Arnold.

His best songs sound filmic. They are epic. *Cattle Call* recently exploded from my car speakers at work which are set to an AM country station. It sounded like an alien serenade. The huge arrangements perfectly support his gorgeous voice.

Arnold always had utter faith in the simple recipe of a good lyric married to a sound the average person would like. Despite his sophisticated appearance, he never got above his raising. Arnold never forgot his roots in a hardworking sharecropping family from Henderson, Tennessee.

Simply by adding violins to his musical arrangements, Arnold opened country music up to a wider audience. He was a pioneer. He pushed country music forward.

Set aside all notions of pop mu-

sic or country and just listen to "What's He Doing in My World" and "Make the World Go Away." I still get the shivers. My eyes tear. Those songs are music for the ages. They will never grow old.

Arnold had his first hit in 1947 with "Each Minute Seems a Million Years" and continued to have charting singles into the 80s. Along the way he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame and named the first Entertainer of the Year by the Country Music Association.

What is the application of Arnold's legacy to the Barn Dance? Arnold knew how to honor the past while looking to the future. He did what the Barn Dance wants to do. Keep your feet on the ground but don't be afraid to fly. Change isn't always bad. In fact, it's necessary. The world changes and the audience along with it. Be proud of your past but not bound by it.

Eddy Arnold trusted his instincts. I think that gut-level confidence is the greatest lesson his storied life provides. But if its not lessons you're looking for than just listen to that voice. That's what I'm talking about. That's what I'll miss.

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