

The Barn Dance Opera Journal

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Fall Edition

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FIDDLES OF THE BARN DANCE

A two part series by Lynn Russwurm

The CKNX Wingham, Ontario Barn Dance ran non-stop from 1937 to 1963 and fiddles were always an intergral part of the show. Some who started with this show and went on to much greater things in Canadian country music include: Al Cherny, Ward Allen, Mel Lavigne, and Clare Adlam. In most cases, the Barn Dance was the first important step up the proverbial ladder for these people.

One of the earliest was Clare Adlam. Clare was one of the founders of the Ranch Boys, and played with them until he left to pursue other projects. Another was Ernie Karges, who was with the Ranch Boys for a short period after Clare left. Next came Rossie Mann, who stayed until ill-health forced him into early retirement in the '70's, long after the Barn Dance quit operating.

Then there was Archie Mann who played twin fiddles with Rossie in the Ranch Boys for many years. Many people thought Archie and Rossie to

looking like a smaller replica. At various times, there were other fiddlers who worked with the Ranch Boys for a short period of time.

When the Golden Prairie Cowboys blew in from New Brunswick in the forties, they brought with them a vibrant new style of music that was much more in line with the music of Bob Wills & The Texas Playboys. The original line-up comprised of boss-man Slim Boucher on bass, Maurice Bolyer on banjo, fiddle, guitar and piano, Lucky Ambo on anything that had strings, as well as being a singer and comedian. Red Burns was the fiddle player who delighted audiences with his version of 'Listen To The Mockingbird.' Many claimed that Red only knew a dozen tunes, but on the ones he did know, no one could touch him.

Their music was a radical departure from the old-time style of the Ranch Boys, but as good as they were, they just couldn't compete with

the locally popular Ranch Boys and so they had difficulty staying together as a group. Red Burns was the first to leave and the other three filled in at various times with other groups. Both Slim and Maurice did stints with the Ranch Boys.

The Golden Prairie Cowboys were replaced on the Barn Dance by the Barn Dance Gang, who also doubled as the Serenade Ranch Gang on Earl Heywood's radio show and his records. This band's most memorable line-up consisted of Earl Heywood on guitar, Jack Kingston on stand-up bass, Lloyd Bank on steel guitar, Bill Mankiss on accordion, and the twin fiddles of Ward Allen and Mel Lavigne. Other members at various times were: Bill Sims on piano, Dusty Denyke on guitar, as well as some members of the now-defunct Golden Prairie Cowboys.

In 1952 things started to go sour as Ward Allen was let go due to a drinking problem and Mel

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An early photo of Rossie Mann posing with his fiddle.

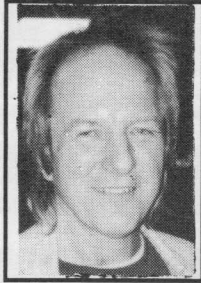


Earl Heywood and the Serenade Ranch Gang (circa 1951). This photo was taken following a radio program at the original CKNX Radio studio in Wingham. Left to right - Mel Lavigne - fiddle; Jack Kingston - bass; Bill Mankiss - piano/accordion; Lloyd Bank - steel guitar; Ward Allen - fiddle; and front centre is Earl Heywood sitting on the big stand-up bass.

be brothers, when in fact they were not. I believe there was probably a distant family relationship there. They played in exactly the same style, with Ross looking like a mountain of a man, and Archie

The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



Remember the days when Nashville had its own satellite channel and so many of us tuned in to see Ralph Emery on 'Nashville Now' or Crook and Chase, as well as live performances from the Grand Ole Opry and special performances and interviews with classic country stars and many of the new country stars as well? Ah yes, it only seems like yesterday and in such a short time country music television has been reduced to recycled videos, bad movies and karaoke wannabe's.

If you consider the original CMT out of Nashville, it was the enterprising Gaylord Entertainment Group that was responsible for bringing country music to the world via satellite. Country music witnessed a resurgence of popularity in numbers that seemed almost unattainable by any standards. Nashville became certified as 'Music City' where tourists and fans would flock to see the stars of the Grand Ole Opry in a brand new state of the art venue. Opryland was a major musical theme park destination where you could be entertained by major country stars and up and coming new artists. Printers Alley, and Broadway, downtown as well as the new Wildhorse Saloon, were major 'hotspots' for hungry country music fans. Fanfare became an annual event to meet and greet with some of your favourite country music stars. Even smaller venues like Ernest Tubb's Midnight Jamboree attracted record crowds. People came to check out Music Row, or the Songwriter's Circle at the Bluebird Café, and delighted in visiting many of the museums of some of their favourite stars. Smaller clubs like legendary Tootsies, or places like Gruen Guitars, Ernest Tubb Records, Buddy Kilens upscale Stockyards entertainment restaurant or even the backstreet greasy spoon like Arnold's had their moment in the sun.

Nashville had never seen success of such magnitude, but nothing lasts forever. Gay-

lord Entertainment replaced Ralph Emery with the shortlived tenure of Crook and Chase as hosts. CMT reduced it's live shows for the more economical video/nostalgia T.V. format. They shut down the seasonal Opryland and replaced it with a huge 'year round' indoor shopping mall complete with a Bass Outfitters store. The 'Taj Mahal' ediface, Gaylord Hotel was built 'Las Vegas style' complete with a meandering stream, waterfalls, rainforest, 100's of magnificent suites, ballroom, etc. A convention lover's dream come true. Gaylord became sole proprietor of CMT Canada and likewise changed the format to their liking. The Grand Ole Opry took up winter residence at the old 'Mother Church' Ryman Auditorium so that they could rent out the new venue for other unrelated country events. Broadcasting of the Saturday night Opry live on CMT U.S.A. was cancelled and most recently dropped from CMT Canada as well.

Yes, the honeymoon was over and big money had it's way. The trickledown was obvious elsewhere as well. Printers Alley soon became known for blues and jazz. The individual country music stars museums faded away and now everything is in one big Country Music Hall of Fame Museum downtown. Fanfare is still going, but not the big attraction it once was. Tootsies, Leg-ends, The Bluegrass Inn, etc. on Broadway are still operating, but cater to a younger country sound and crowd.

I think Branson, Mo. was hoping to capitalize on the 'greed factor' in Nashville and fast changes from the 'old guard' to the new. They realized that people still wanted to be entertained by stars they knew and could relate to without having to deal with the 'here today and gone tomorrow' attitude of Nashville. But Branson has seen it's fair share of changing times as well, as if it was meant to be. What is really unfortunate is that Gaylord Entertainment could have given the people what they wanted and aged gracefully by cutting back slowly instead of the 'big business' mentality of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I also believe that it drove traditional country music fans into resurrecting traditional country music festivals of their own all over North America. The Barn Dance Blyth Campout would certainly qualify as would the Lions Head Annual Country Music Jamboree and the Trenton Classic Country Music Reunion.

The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment

Museum

P.O. Box 68

Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0

Phone (519) 530-8000

(or leave a message)

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www.thebardance.ca

Earl Heywood

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People still want to hear and be entertained by music and musicians they grew up with.

Needless to say, Nashville is still Music City, and it will always be the hub of country music. There are still some places you can find where real country music is played. Some say that people don't really like change and are set in their ways. I believe people adapt to change if it is gradual. Most people, especially country folks, don't like being taken advantage of. Kind of like gas prices. People don't mind paying a few cents more at the pump. They just don't like it when it's 90 cents a litre one day ... and then \$1.19 the next.

Hope to see you at an upcoming Barn Dance show.

Comments? Please contact:

Grant Heywood

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E-mail: heywoods@golden.net

2009 COMING EVENTS

Date	Event Name	Place
Thursday, November 12	The Barn Dance Christmas Show	Norgan Theatre, Palmerston - 8 p/m/ start
December	Christmas Show in Wingham	Info: call 519-530-8000

Continued from Page 1

Lavigne left to start his own band. This is when Al Cherny, still in his teens, was brought in from Medicine Hat, Alberta for the fiddle chores. Jack Kingston left for Hamilton to star on the new Main Street Jamboree and was replaced by Hank Mac-Donald. Bill Mankiss left as well and was replaced by Hap Swatridge. Lloyd Bank ended up on the Main Street Jamboree and was replaced by Dan Grummett. This combination stayed on for several years, until TV came into the picture, at which time the Barn Dance Gang was disbanded.

Slim Boucher and The Golden Prairie Cowboys came back with a new version, with Slim on bass, Donny Steel on lead guitar, Jack Day on drums, and Al Cherny and Lucky Ambo on twin fiddles. What a combination that was!! This group recorded one single for Sparton Records, 'Flippin' Your Lid', and on the flip side, 'Prairie Stomp.' If you can dig out a copy of this record, you'll know what a superb group this was.

Now, let's find out a bit about the main fiddlers. *In this issue we will cover Clarence Adlam, Ross Mann and Ward Allen. In the upcoming winter edition of the Barn Dance Journal we will continue and cover, Mel Lavigne, Al Cherny and Lucky Ambo.*

CLARENCE 'CLARE' ADLAM - As mentioned before, Clare was one of the founders of the Ranch Boys. As the group was in its infancy, things didn't always go as planned, and Clare left for other things. Throughout the following years, Clare always had his own band and for some time had his own program on Saturday afternoons on CKNX radio.

He eventually relocated to the Owen Sound area where he opened a music store, the first of several in Owen Sound, Durham, Waterloo and Mount Forest. Eventually, he got into the recording and publishing business and released a number of albums on his own Circle M label. He had previously recorded for Sparton, Paragon and Cynda Records. He was manager of the Hepworth Country Music Hall in its heyday, and was always a strong country music promoter.

Clarence was named after the 'Duke of Clarence' and played well into his 70's until ill-health forced him into retirement. Clarence passed away in 2000.

ROSS MANN - Born in Clinton, Ontario, Ross never strayed too far from his roots. A jovial man, noted for his good humour and his genuine concern for his fellow man, Rossie was slow to anger and was a mainstay on the Barn Dance for many years. He operated a music store out of Bluevale, Ontario, and after his death it was sold to Ernie King. It was moved to Wingham where it became the Ernie King Music Centre and is still operating today.

Ross had a natural swing to his fiddle music that imparted its own rhythm to a tune to the point that he could have played his fiddle without rhythm accompaniment and people could have danced to it. He also sang on occasion with the



An earlier version of the CKNX Ranch Boys. Left to right - Don Robertson - guitar; Fred Templeman - mandolin; Rossie Mann - fiddle; Laura Hayden - stand up bass.

Ranch Boys. A fan favourite was, 'The Cat Came Back'. Ross was also a composer of note, including two waltzes, 'Black Velvet Waltz' and 'The Bluevale Waltz', which were recorded by fiddler, Al Cherny.

WARD ALLEN - Born in 1924 in Kirkton, Ontario, Ward learned to play fiddle at a very young age without ever learning to read music. Those who worked with him regarded Ward as one of the most natural musicians of all time. They labelled him an old time fiddler, but Ward could hold his own with any musician. I played with Ward one evening, as a fill-in musician for a dance which followed one of Wilf Carter's shows, and it was a real pleasure to work with Ward.

Ward worked on the Barn Dance for about three years. He won the North American Fiddle Championship in Shelburne in 1953, then shortly after, he relocated to Ottawa where he worked with Bob King and The Happy Wanderers.

If for nothing else, Ward won everlasting rec-

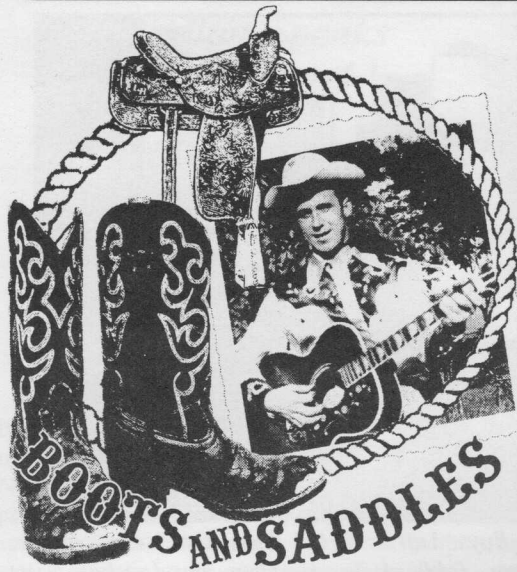
ognition for composing 'Maple Sugar', the most played fiddle tune of all time. Every fiddle player around the world plays this tune and at one time, Ward's own version was used on WWVA in West Virginia. It was used as their theme song and it began every hour of the day with 'Maple Sugar.' Now if that isn't exposure, I don't know what is. Ward did many cross-country tours with Wilf Carter from 1954 to 1956, and when Wilf heard Maple Sugar, Ward told him he didn't have a title for it; so Wilf said, "Why don't you call it 'Maple Sugar'?" Now it is a Canadian fiddle classic and is played at the beginning of every current Barn Dance performance in his honour.

Ward recorded three albums for Sparton Records, plus a number of singles for Alvina and Sparton. One of the last recordings Ward played back-up on was an album by Mac Wiseman, shortly before Ward's death in 1965. He died of a heart attack at the early age of 41.

****NOTE: Part Two of FIDDLES OF THE BARN DANCE will be published in the upcoming Winter Edition of the Barn Dance Opera Journal.**



Earl Heywood's 75th birthday March 1992. Pictured here from left to right: Fiddlers, Graham and Eleanor Townsend; Earl and Martha Heywood and fiddler Clare Adlam.



by Lynn Russwurm

Before I get into my column, I'd like to mention a new book that's just been published. It's called "Whispering Pines" by Jason Schneider. It's the story of music in Canada and is a great read for anyone interested in our music scene here in our own homeland. It starts out with Wilf Carter and Hank Snow, and then progresses into the music of Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Ronnie Hawkins, Anne Murray, etc. The Hank Snow / Wilf Carter chapters make the book worthwhile reading for country music fans. The overall book is well written, and deserves a place on the shelf of anybody who is interested in Canadian music.

What makes it doubly interesting for me is the fact that Jason is a lifelong resident of Kitchener-Waterloo, and upon meeting him recently find that he's very much interested in our Barn Dance and there is a good possibility of working with him on a further book on country music in Canada. Jason writes regular columns in the Nightlife section of the K-W Record and has already contributed a recent article on our group, "Crossover Junction".

There is a brand new association, just recently formed that some of you might be interested in, The Waterloo-Wellington Bluegrass Music Association. A weekly jam session is being organized with the first one being on Oct. 22 at the Army and Navy Club at 408 Gage Street in Kitchener.

Further on the bluegrass topic, it never ceases to amaze me how much talent is out there. Many people just enjoy picking and singing for their own amusement and there are many who would be good enough to join the professional ranks but have no de-

sire to do so. Just recently I had the opportunity to attend a jam which is an annual event. My good friend Doug Benson has been hosting this particular jam in his back yard in Whitby for a number of years; however this year the location was changed to the back yard of Jack and Gloria Gordon in Newcastle. Although it meant traveling a few miles farther down the 401 beyond Whitby, I'm glad I decided to go. First of all, Jack Gordon and I share an especially avid interest in the history of our beloved country music. His home is, like mine, a virtual depository of all things Canadian country. Posters of past events line the walls, photo albums filled

with pictures and memorabilia of past events, antique instruments all have a place in the Gordon household. And it turns out Jack is a member of our Barn Dance Association. I wonder how many others are out there with treasure troves of memorabilia that have been amassed throughout the years, pictures and the like that could be shared with others. Some of Jack's pictures will be appearing in these pages in the near future.

Some of you may remember Tommy Wade and the Country Rebels from the '70s when they were one of the top flying bluegrass bands in Canada. Their TV appearances on Countrytime and The Tommy Hunter Show were highlights in their career, they also had several top-rated albums to their credit. Well

Tommy came up from his farm in Perkinsfield for the jam and was in top form as always. One of several 5-string banjo players was Larry Miller, originally from the "South Shore" of Montreal where he grew up picking in a family group. He was an original member of the Southern Ramblers, who had to their credit an early Canadian bluegrass album. From there he moved up to the legendary group called "Cody", with whom he played for a number of years. Now a resident of Markham, Larry is recently retired from an executive position with The Toronto Star and is enjoying his new Huber banjo, and I must say, I've never heard better. On dobro, there was Roger Spence from Cannington, I understand that Roger is an award winning dobro man, with a number of dobro man of the year awards. There were others, that were equally impressive and all in all a really enjoyable day. I only regret that I had to leave early so I don't know how long the jam continued, all I can say is we need more jams like this and hopefully this new Association will fill a much needed gap.

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 ~ (519) 530-8000
E-mail: webmaster@thebardance.ca

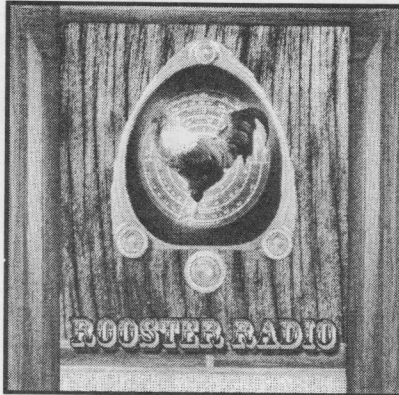


Jamming around the Gordon kitchen table. From left to right - Ron Adams, Larry Miller and Lynn Russwurm.

FEATURE C. D. REVIEW

'ROOSTER RADIO' (JAY RIEHL)

Rooster Radio is a totally different concept C.D. by local veteran musician extraordinaire, Jay Riehl. The C.D. is laced with pop, country, and R & B, flavoured music done in a radio show format, complete with commercials, and interview segments with Jay and interviewer, Sam Cook. This is not your everyday "run of the mill" type CD, but a unique blend or original music of many genres that showcase Jay's mastery of voice technique, musicianship and song-writing, spanning the last 15 years or more.



Many folks will know Jay Riehl from his group, South Mountain which also has a cut on this CD, not to mention some of Jay's other projects such as, The Creators, djkillers, and Blind River. Much of the CD was recorded at Jay's own studio 'The Swamp' (outside of Stratford), with many close top notch musician friends. Besides family, Jay dedicated the CD to his late Grandma, Adela Riehl, who guided and instilled in him, the passion of music at a very early age.

Of the 13 songs, "Karma", "That's It", "I'll Be Alone When I Cry", "Dreams" and the upbeat radio friendly "One That Got Away" are real standouts. The song, "After" is an emotional, and personal 'heart on your sleeve' first class ballad. Very well done and highly recommended for something out of the ordinary.

Over half the proceeds from this CD will be donated to the care of hungry and sick kids. For more information go to: www.roosterradio.info or e-mail: jay@roosterradio.info
(Have a C.D. you want reviewed, please contact the Editor.)

IN MEMORIAM



Lorne Prince passed away at Freeport hospital in K/W after a lengthy illness on Oct. 13/09 at the age of 80. Beloved husband of 57 yrs. to Elaine (nee Benninger). Loving father of Karen & Wayne Buchholtz, Lisa & Edward Kroetsch, and Jayne Eulenberg, all of Kitchener. As well as grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Lorne was an active member of the St. Mary's RC Church and choir and the Knights of Columbus No. 1504. A 60 yr. member of the Musicians Union and stand up bass player/harmonica player for Lynn Russwurm's Jamboree Reunion Band for many years. He will be sadly missed by family, friends and by the Barn Dance Historical Society.

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Best of the Holiday Season from
the Barn Dance Historical Society

WHO WROTE THE SONG?

(Back Street Affair)

During the 1950's, country songs began dealing more openly with such problems as alcohol and infidelity. One of the outstanding songs of this era was 'Back Street Affair', written by Billy Wallace. Flashing back to the last year Hank Williams was alive, the writer of 'Back Street Affair' submitted his song to the popular country star. Hank wanted to record the song, and brought it to the attention of his publisher, Fred Rose, who was directing Hank's career. After discussing the possibilities of the song, the publisher refused to let Hank record 'Back Street Affair'. He thought the song was too controversial to chance a recording by Williams and thought it might damage his career.

Hank Williams believed whoever would record the song would have a runaway hit. Hank never did record the song and it eventually assigned to Webb Pierce. In this case, the publisher was wrong and Hank Williams was right. Webb Pierce had a runaway hit with 'Back Street Affair' which most certainly helped his career.

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

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Country Music Memories



Red Burns and His Burn-Ettes - Red was a member of the original Golden Prairie Cowboys. From left to right: Bonnie, Red and Lee.



Don Messer and Fred Roden.



The Tommy Hunter Show - Back row, left to right - Mike Ferbey, Jack Jensen. Front row, left to right - Al Harris, Wally Troughott, Tommy Hunter and Mark Wald.



Tex Ritter, Fred Roden and Dorothy Eay (Mrs. Tex Ritter).

Above 2 photos are from the Jack Gordon Collection,
Newcastle, Ontario.

Above 2 photos are courtesy of Bob Gardiner.

COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown

(Toronto and surrounding area)

* **Oct. 17** - Josie and Loria, aKa previously, Jennie and Josie, now Newfie Chicks, at RCL, 150 Industrial Pky, Aurora, dinner 7:30, dance 9 pm. Tickets call 905-727-9938. Also at RCL on Dec. 12 at Bradford Christmas Dance.

* **Dec. 5**, The Rankin Sisters begin Christmas Tour in Richmond Hill.

* **Oct. 5** - Niagara Rhythm Section, Niagara on the Lake, Anchor4Age, 168 Ricardo St. 905-468-2141.

* **Oct. 8** - Johnny Reid, North Bay Capitol Theatre and Opera House; Orillia, Oct. 7.

* **Oct. 1** - Diane Chase at Corral, 433 Simcoe St., Oshawa. 905-571-1422.

* **RCL Branch 582** - 456 Hensall Circle. 905-277-2902. Oct. 2 Dinner/Dance 6:30 pm, Winston James; Oct. 2 and 3, Dave Whalen and the Starlites, 9 pm.

* **Oct. 2 & 3** - Army and Navy, 765 Third St., Mississauga, 905-274-9981 - Roadhouse Boys.

* **Little Bit of Home Pub and Grill**, 2961 Lakeshore Blvd., Toronto, 416-253-4416. Oct. 3 & 4 Jam sessions with Silver Wings, 8 pm; Oct. 3 Craigs Band, 9 pm; Oct. 7 & 8 Karaoke with Sweet Daddy Siki.

* **There will be a Benefit** - on Oct. 23, Campbellford Legion of Elly Kelly's husband Joe, who has cancer. Elly is a well known accordion player in the Toronto and surrounding area.

* **Bluesky Bluegrass Club**, who was previously at the Barrie Legion the third Sun. of the month will now be at Barrington Retirement, 450 Yonge St., Barrie in the theatre room, which is warm and cozy. Same date and at 1:30 pm.

* **Doc Walker**, will be performing Oct. 20 at the Blyth Memorial Community Centre, 423 Queen St. at 8 pm, 1-877-862-5984; also on Oct. 21 at the Roxy Theatre, Owen Sound, 519-371-2833.

* **Oct. 17** - The Good Brothers will be appearing at the Gibson Centre in Alliston.

* **Appearance by George Canyon**, Nov. 29 Belleville Empire Theatre 613-969-0094; Nov. 30 Lindsay Academy Theatre; Dec. 2 Orillia Opry House 705-362-8011.

* **Country Jamboree**, first Sunday of the month at Centennial Hall, Peaceton, with Gerald Davidson, the Country Versatiles. Everyone welcome.

* **Oct. 24** - 456 Hensall Circle, Mississauga, with Eastern Storm and Gary Gale. Dinner 7 pm, Dance 9pm. Tickets call Vince Wadden 902-272-9683.

* **Rosemont Fiddle and Square Dance Club** is held the third Tuesday of the month except Dec., July and Aug. 7 pm at the Orange Hall, Rosemont.

* **Appearances by Doreen Brown** - Warminster Jamboree, first Sunday of month; Shelburne Community Centre, second Sunday; Bond Head, fourth Tuesday; Holland Landing, third Thursday; Don Celsie and Band at Army and Navy, Orillia, second Sunday. Slim Celsie, Don's brother, initially started at the club and played together there. Slim recently passed away and is well known to many in the country music field. He is very sadly missed. This writer was present at his second last show and he will be long remembered as a great yodeler.

* **Jamborees** at Bolton Community Centre, the second Wednesday and Thornton Old Time Fiddlers the second Thursday.

* **Mary Florence and Friends** - in support of Hospic, Simcoe has shows on Sundays 7 - 9 at Oasis Theatre, 201 Hurst St., Barrie. Recent artist, George Hamilton IV. For info 705-728-1583 or email mary-flo@sympatico.ca or www.mary-flo.com

* **New Years Dance** - Warminster Legion. Music by Tex, Dottie and Home-town Country. \$30 per couple. 8:30 - 1:00, Lunch will be served. Tickets call 705-323-1920.

* **Kawartha Lakes Olde Tyme Music Assoc.** Oct. 16 and Nov. 20, 1 pm, round and square dancing at the Coboconk Legion. Info 705-738-3285.

* **Third Sunday of Month** Carden Fiddlers, Sept. to June, 1:30 - 5:00. Carden Rec Centre, Lake Dalrymple. All musi-

cians, singers, dancers welcome. Lunch available. Info call Leigh Wishart 705-325-0009.

* **Second Sunday of Month** - 1 - 4:30, Oakwood Arena upstairs. Musicians Dancers and general public welcome. Open Mic. Elevator access.

* **Last Friday of Month**, 8 pm at Palestine Community Hall.

* **Nov. 29**, Fiddle / Jam / ance. Longford Mills Community Hall 1 to 5 pm. Come early attendance is limited to 125 people. Accoustic instruments only. Back up band Country Memories. Take Rama Rd from Hwy. 12, approx. 3 km north of Casino Rama, turn right onto Longford Mills Rd., hall is on left at railway tracks. Info call Alvin Eastcott 705-833-2536 or Ralph Price 705-835-3159.

* **First Sunday of Month** - Maple Leaf Jamboree, Moose Lodge, Lindsay, presented by Chef Adams, scheduled entertainers and open mic.

Wishing all the best of Health, Happiness and Cheers for the holidays as this will be the last issue for 2009 and a super 2010 sharing tons of Great Country Music.

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.
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Sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL	\$20.00 ea.
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NEW Al Cherny CD - "Live / The Lost Recordings"	\$15.00 ea.
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BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

If I had to explain to a young musician or music fan what barn dance radio programs meant to the country music industry of yesteryear, I would liken their influence to that of the television show *American Idol* today.

In their heydays, Barn dance shows from the *Louisiana Hayride* to the *Grand Ole Opry* to *The CKNX Barn Dance* were insanely popular. As popular, if not more so, than the television programs are today. Hard to believe perhaps, but it's true.

They were an essential stepping stone to countless country careers. Just like the music charts of today are studied with winners/participants of the various Idol style television shows (*Pop Idol*, *Canadian Idol*, *American Idol*, *Nashville Star*, etc.) the country music charts from fifty years ago were lined with members of a seemingly untold number of barn dance programs.

Just like Buddy Jewel, Carrie Underwood, Kellie Pickler, Josh Gracin,

Miranda Lambert, and Chris Young used televised idol stages to launch their careers, the country music giants of the past, from Hank Williams to Patsy Cline to Ray Price, cut their teeth barnstorming radio shows across North America.

An aspiring singer knew he or she had made the big time when they were offered membership on one of the larger barn dance shows. Perhaps just as telling, is the extent to which lesser known talent labored away on the programs.

I just read in Shelby Singleton's (a storied Nashville producer most famous for producing Jeannie C. Riley's 1968 crossover smash *Harper Valley P.T.A.*) obituary that he got his start in music on "The Cradle to the Stars," on the *Louisiana Hayride*, in the 1950s.

The unfortunately forgotten singer Henson Cargill of *Skip a Rope* fame (also from 1968), hosted the *Midwestern Hayride* barn dance program out of Cincinnati, Ohio which was syndicated as *Country Hayride*.

Participating on the weekly radio broadcasts was a rite of passage. It is where one went to make it as a singer.

Membership was a badge of acceptance.

It would be too easy to say that radio barn dances evolved into TV's reality competition singing shows. It would also be wrong.

Barn dance shows fundamentally differ from the Idol styled shows in that the former is supportive, the later competitive.

It is hard to pin down, but much of the music produced from the Idol machine feels like it is lost in a high school popularity contest. Much of it is juvenile, fleeting and elusive. Like cotton candy on a wet finger.

Country music owes much of its strong identity to the music nurtured under the banner of barn dances.

Barn dance programs and the stars they produced have not only stood the test of time, they defined a sound, a culture, and a community.

Time will tell if the Idol shows age as gracefully as something like the Barn Dance out of little Wingham, Ontario Canada.

As of now, the singing reality shows make for good television and middling music.

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