



The Barn Dance Opera Journal



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Spring Edition

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Hank Snow ~ The Singing Ranger

by Lynn Russwurm

Last issue, we presented the Wilf Carter story. Someone said to me, now you have to give the same honours to Hank Snow. Okay, that's fair enough, as these were the two outstanding figures in Canadian country music, so here goes.

Unlike Wilf Carter, Hank's fame was greatest in the U.S.A. He started a few years later than Wilf and their paths followed different directions. Hank was born in 1914 in Brooklyn, Nova Scotia. After a troubled childhood, including divorced parents, an abusive step-father, stays in an orphanage, at the age of 12 Hank made his way to sea as a cabin boy. Returning to his mother he was enamored by a guitar she had obtained and this was his first encounter with music. And on hearing his first Jimmie Rodgers recording, he knew where his future lay.

He managed to line up a radio program in Halifax, a recording session in Montreal where he recorded the first two songs he wrote on the eve of the session. Although sales of this first session were slim, RCA brought him back into the studios for further sessions and sales improved. He assembled his own band and worked the Maritimes and included in his band at times were Maurice Bolyer and Winston "Scotty" Fitzgerald. Although Hank was known to have a drinking problem, he slowly built up a reputation as an entertainer and was able to make a living with his music. His song-writing developed and he issued a number of song books through Canadian Music Sales.

When he had built up enough capital he ventured into the U.S. and this is where he felt he must go to advance his dreams. However the U.S. wasn't waiting for him with open arms, in spite of an extended stay at the Wheeling Jamboree at WWVA in Wheeling. There he worked with such established stars as Big Slim, The Lone Cowboy. When his resources were depleted he would return to his native Maritimes to recover from his losses. At one point he made his way to Hollywood where he looked up fellow Canadian, Allen Erwin, The Calgary Kid, who was trying to get into movies and was playing a few bit parts at Republic Studios. It was from Allen Erwin where he got his trained horse, Shawnee. Allen had trained Shawnee to do all kinds of tricks. Also, with Allen Erwin, Hank put out a joint song book, which Hank brought back to Canada for

publication by Canadian Music Sales. Some sources say Hank and The Calgary Kid parted in an unfriendly way, but Hank gives no indication of this in his later biography. One of Hank's stops in the U.S. was an engagement in a bar owned by Jack Ruby, I believe in Dallas. On one of his trips to the States, Hank played some dates with Ernest Tubb, and it was Tubb who intervened at the Grand Ole Opry to bring Hank in for some appearances. Although his initial spots on the Opry were less than sensational, with the release in the U.S. of "I'm Moving On", there was no stopping Hank.

Since his marriage at the age of 21, Hank gave credit to his wife, Min, for supporting him and keeping him on the straight and narrow. Their union produced one son, Jimmie Rodgers Snow, who eventually became an evangelist after a few rocky years as a country performer.

Hank has often been accused of being hard to get along with, and turning his back on friends he knew back when. I was standing near him when he was approached by somebody I knew who claimed to know Hank. Well, Hank did acknowledge him and said how many people will come up to him claiming to know him and he did not know them. Hank was very pleasant with my friend and I believe this explains Hank's coolness at times, plainly said, he did not like phonies.

In the U.S., after his success with "I'm Moving On", Hank lined up publishing with The Aberback Brothers and

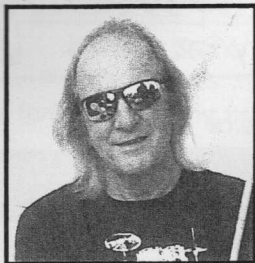


HANK SNOW

Continued on Page 3

The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



As I am writing this column it is still minus degrees outside and this is supposed to be spring. I don't have to tell you how cold it was this past winter. I have friends that went to Florida and it still wasn't warm enough down there. Let me say that I appreciate our four seasons here in Canada but ... enough is enough already! My wife and I have decided that if we're to head south for the winter, it should be closer to the equator. Hopefully the snow and ice will melt before our Barn Dance Blyth Campout Jamboree.

I've recently had some time this past winter to do some home renovations. In doing so, I uncovered my old stereo including the turntable. I needed some music while I was working and realized that this older equipment was already upstairs in my work area. So ... I started rummaging through all of those old vinyl record albums I had stored in an upstairs cabinet. Some 700 or so albums I believe. I began pulling out a few old favourites and before I knew it I had a reasonable stack of vinyl to listen to. Of course that knocked about an hour off of my work schedule.

Once I started playing some of my old familiar discs it was like discovering a long lost friend. It made my work time go by in a flash and the memories from those forgotten songs soon began flowing back to me in waves of contentment. I never realized how much I loved

the harmony singing voices of the 'Sons of the Pioneers' or the smooth vocal delivery of 'Ray Price'. I even played some old Gene Autry. Before too long I was playing everything from 'Homer & Jethro' to 'Carl Perkins' and 'Waylon Jennings'. And I can't deny my rock and roll collection as I listened to 'The Eagles', 'Deep Purple', and 'Jimi Hendrix'. I love the music of bygone days right back to the big band era on up. As long as it's good music then it'll have my attention.

I put on some old 'Merle Haggard' to refresh my memory of some of the great tunes this country music legend has recorded. I had an upcoming Merle Haggard Tribute Show to perform at the Commercial Tavern in Maryhill, and I wanted to brush up on Merle's tunes. Most people will agree that Merle Haggard is a living country music legend and after researching his vast catalogue of albums and songs I would certainly agree. We have already lost some iconic country legends, most recently, George Jones and Little Jimmy Dickens. Other than Willie Nelson, I would have to say that Merle Haggard is one of the few still alive and performing.

Okay, so I didn't get a lot of work done during the renovation. The music kind of got in the way, and the next day I had to be onstage with Paul Weber, Harold Macintyre, Kurk Bernard, Mike Weber and Fred Lewis for the Tribute to Merle Haggard Show. It was a fantastic event and we barely put a dent in Merle's catalogue of country gems. In fact we even played overtime and still didn't hit on the many more story songs that Merle is known for. It was an honour to play with the guys on stage and I gained a new respect for what Merle is known for. Great story songs from the heart, sung with true conviction. In country music it doesn't get any better

The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment

Museum

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(or leave a message)

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Earl Heywood

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than that.

You can get that same traditional country music experience from real country music entertainers at an upcoming Barn Dance Show. Please check out the Barn Dance Show Schedule. Hope to see you at the next Barn Dance y'all.

Comments? Please contact:

Grant Heywood

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2015 COMING EVENTS

Date	Event Name	Place
Mon., April 6	Barn Dance Society Annual General Meeting	Barn Dance Museum, Wingham
Sun., April 26	Southwold Library Fundraiser - 2:00 p.m.	Southwold Keystone Complex, Shedden
Sun., May 3	Barn Dance Show - 2:00 p.m.	Purple Hill Country Hall, Thorndale
May 21 to 24	Barn Dance Campout Weekend	Blyth Campgrounds & Arena, Blyth
Sun., June 7	Barn Dance Show - 3:00 p.m.	Commercial Hotel, Maryhill
Tues., July 14	Barn Dance Show - 7:30 p.m.	Bach Festival, Exeter
Sun., Sept. 20	Barn Dance Show - 3:00 p.m.	Melville Presbyterian Church, Brussels

Continued from Page 1

their Hill & Range Publishing Co., issuing song books on a regular basis. As his fame grew his song writing took a back seat and he mostly recorded songs by other writers such as Jenny Lou Carson, and other hot writers of the time. He established a short lived school of music and a store in downtown Nashville that also housed his own publishing company, under Hill & Range. Hank continued for many years as one of our greatest and most copied stars of country music. His style was so unique that many tried to emulate him, especially Maritimers who by and large adored Hank Snow. Hank had the longest tenure with RCA Victor of any recording artist and turned out many hits, including guitar albums with Chet Atkins. He was a triple threat man, singing, guitarist and song writer. He played the Grand Ole Opry on WSM until near the end of his life, he was a small man in stature, but a large man in talent.

BOOKING THE BARN DANCE

If you are interested in more information about booking the Barn Dance Musical Production,

please write to:

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FEATURE C. D. REVIEW

"Now Playing"

The Western Swing Authority

by Grant Heywood

It has been exciting to watch the evolution of Kitchener's own 'Western Swing Authority'. They have played both the CCMA awards show and Juno awards in the past year alone, and have been nominated for many awards in Canada and the U.S. This is their third c.d. and they have really gone 'uptown' on this one, as it is their most professional outing to date. Having



local award winning musician/producer Jason Barry record and co-produce this fine masterpiece with the band certainly puts the WSA in a whole new class.

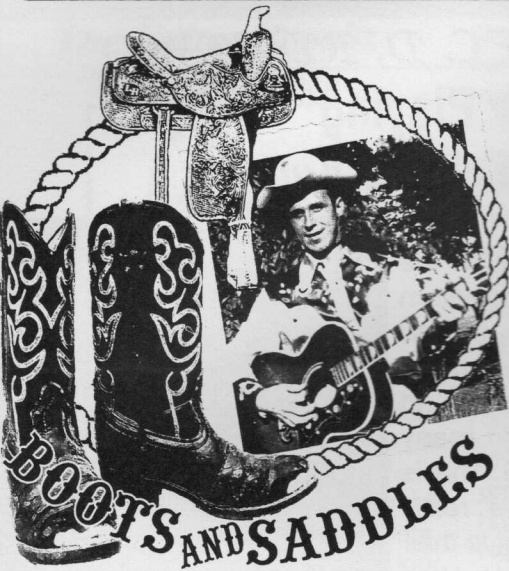
There are 12 cuts on the c.d. with almost everyone in the band contributing in the writing process, except for two classic gems, Miss Molly and Slow Boat To China. Top notch vocals from the husband/wife team of Shane & Stacey Lee Guse who lead one of the hottest bands this side of the Grand River and beyond. Outstanding twin fiddle work by Dan Howlett and Shane Guse, and the 'Speedy Gonzales' of steel guitar, Mr. Ed Ringwald. Paul 'Chappy' Chapman is Fender Telecaster guitar's worst nightmare, as he could likely wear out a guitar fretboard in a week. The rhythm section of Matthew Lima on standup bass and drummer Jimmy Boudreau work as one 'well oiled machine' and pretty much drive this band to be on top of their game every time they perform.

Some of my favourite tracks are the Stacey Lee/Matthew Lima tune Livin' A Dream where Stacey nails the vocals as if she were Patti Page reincarnated. Old Dance Floor written by Shane Guse/Jason Blaine, has that definitive western swing to it. Rocket To The Moon was written by Cdn. Blues guitarist Colin James along with Colin Nairne and is rockabilly and swing all rolled into one. Cowtown Queen by Dan Howlett/Shane Guse is a song that would put a smile on Bob Wills face if he were alive today. The only instrumental on the c.d. Bapadoodle, was written by steel player Ed Ringwald and showcases just how far these musicians will go to get all their licks in.

You can catch the Western Swing Authority live on stage almost every 2nd Tuesday at the Commercial Tavern in Maryhill. They are one of the finest western swing bands in Canada and not to be missed. For c.d. info. bio. and tour schedule, contact : www.thewesternswingauthority.com

BARN DANCE SOUVENIRS

Please go to www.thebardance.ca
for a full list of Barn Dance Souvenirs.



by Lynn Russwurm

At this writing, the signs of Spring are all around us and I must say it is about time, it has sure been a cold winter. This time I'd like to bring your attention to some Canadian boys who went to Australia to ply their wares.

Smilin' Billy Blinkhorn grew up in British Columbia, on our West Coast. Born in 1914, he had early ambitions to be in country music. At age 13, he got his first guitar and within a year he was on the radio with his own program. Like most youngsters of that day, Jimmie Rodgers was his idol as was Carson Robison. With his BC rangers he developed a large following within the province.

He tried to land a recording contract without much success, but he did land a job with Dad's Cookies, who sponsored his radio show. When he was asked for a raise, they suggested



Smilin' Billy Blinkhorn

a trip to Australia where his music would be well received. Once there he lost no time in landing his own radio show, similar to the one he had in Canada which was well received. In 1939, he cut his first records for Regal Zonophone, then came a stint in the service in World War II in New Guinea and The Philippines, serving most of his hitch as an interpreter of the Japanese language which he had picked up in his native Canada. He continued recording sporadically until 1947, continuing his entertainment career until 1974 when he lost a leg to an arterial disease. His death in

1977 left his Australian wife and 2 children to mourn their loss.

His recordings have been gathered in an LP in Australia and they show an enterprising entertainer who was willing to take a chance. Many think he was Australian born, but really he was a Canadian who chose his own path in life.

Several issues back we covered Donn Reynolds who spent some time in Australia, but came back to his own country Canada, so we won't go into him here.

But there is one more who made the trip to the other side of the world to carry on with his music. The music of Luke Simmons was presented to the world via two different recording sessions, the first one from New Zealand. Luke hailed from Vancouver, born in 1927. In 1953, we find him and his bass playing buddy Vic Crane and their wives in New Zealand in a recording studio doing a session that was a highly respected piece of work when it was released. Along with 2 studio musicians they laid down six sides with a further session schedule for later in the year.

The band was called The Blue Mountain Boys.

Then can a return to Canada and in 1957, Luke Simmons and The Blue Mountain Boys were in a studio to cut an album for Rodeo Records. Again with Vic Crane and studio musicians, an album was produced, again featuring country standards of the day with

a bit of yodeling thrown in.

But Luke Simmons' restless nature took him on another journey, this time to Seattle in the U.S.A., where the call to music left him and this was the termination of his career which had held out such potential. Today we have re-issues of his material on both vinyl and CD and it still sounds good.



DON'T FORGET

Mon., April 6, 2015

**The Barn Dance
Historical Society's
Annual General Meeting**

Starting at 7:00 p.m. at the
Barn Dance & Entertainment Museum,
273 Josephine Street, Wingham, Ont.
*All members are invited to attend, vote
and participate in committees.*

See you there!!

**BARN DANCE JOURNAL
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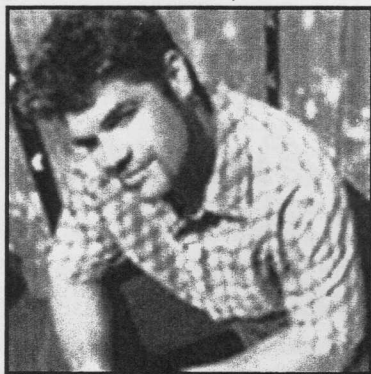
Entertainer Profiles Performing at 18th Annual Blyth Barn Dance Campout Jamboree

The lineup for the upcoming Blyth Barn Dance Campout Jamboree is already confirmed and includes a variety of super talented entertainers. The main stage Saturday Night Barn Dance Show is always a crowd pleaser and this year is no exception. The following is a brief description of the special guest performers at this year's Blyth Campout event.

The Saturday Night Barn Dance Stage Show Performers

Bill Murray is somewhat of a fixture in the Brantford area from which he hails. He has been pickin' and singin' country music with his band 'The Moonlighters' for many years. Bill comes from a family of country singers including his two singing sisters. Bill was to perform at last year's show but was unable to make it and will be one of the headliners this year. When it comes to singing country music, (especially George Jones) then you can count on Bill to deliver. He was an award winning vocalist at the Simcoe Singing Contest and recently released his very latest cd 'It's Never Too Late'. Hope he sings a George Jones tune.

Kiley Joe Masson grew up in Princeton Ont. and now resides in Ingersoll with his wife and young children. Often called 'that wild piano man', Kiley Joe has made a name for himself with 3 albums to his credit. An original song 'Shame On Me' gained airplay recognition across Canada and Europe. He played 15 years as a singles act and now has his own 5 pc. band. When he's not performing alone or with his band, Kiley Joe is 'in demand' piano player for many of the tribute acts such as Amberly Beatty's tribute to Loretta Lynn and others. His rendition of the Jerry Lee Lewis classic 'Great Balls of Fire' is worth the price of admission.



KILEY JOE MASSON

Linsey Beckett is almost a household name in western Ontario since growing up being a fiddler/performer with her brother Tyler in the Beckett family band from Owen Sound. Since stepping out on her own (excuse the pun) the award winning step dancing fiddler has made a name for herself appearing on several recording artists cd's, playing with the likes of Ronnie Dunn, Brad James, Marshall Dane, Mati Haskell, South Mt. and so many more. She has toured North America and Europe with the amazing string ensemble Bowfire as well as South Mt. She even got to play at 007 Sean Connery's 80th birthday party in the Bahamas. Linsey also performed on 3 cd releases by the Beckett Family. She is a university graduate music teacher, a fantastic fiddler, step-dancer, and singer as well. You will certainly be charmed by this truly professional entertainer and her cute winning smile.



LINSEY BECKETT

Paul Newell is the bass player/singer for the Woodstock based 'Ridin' High' country band with Fred Lewis. He is in his element when playing and singing true traditional country music. His sense of humour is always a part of his stage persona but he is equally a great bass player as well as a great singer. Paul is from Brantford Ontario and has been a lover of traditional country music most of his life. Paul also writes and records country music when he gets a chance. You're ears are in for a real treat when Paul takes the stage and sings his heart out on a country ballad.

Sue Weber Bell is the sister of country singer Paul Weber and steel guitarist Mike Weber. The Weber family, hails from the New Hamburg area originally and are about as traditional as country music gets. It almost seems like they have been performing old country music forever. Sue learned country music from her dad, Howard 'Smoky' Weber just like the rest of the Weber siblings. Sue, like her brother Paul Weber, knows more country songs than I care to count. She has a distinctive country voice and can pretty much tackle any female or male country song you can think of. Besides being a great singer, Sue is a guitarist and bass guitarist as well. (No slouches in the Weber family.) Sue is a truly gifted singer who doesn't take her talent for granted. With her down to earth family spirit and charm, you will be entertained and then some.

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18th Annual

BARN DANCE JAMBOREE/CAMPOUT

May 21, 22, 23, 24, 2015
Blyth Arena Complex
Blyth, ON

May 21st, 2015 - Campers Jam
May 22nd, 2015
Bluegrass Show & Open Stage
May 23rd, 2015
Barn Dance Show & Dance
May 24th, 2015 - Gospel Show

full details & schedule online at
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Country Music Memories



Johnny Siska & The Westernairs with Lefty Frizzell. Back Row - Wally Boettger, Mike Slauenwhite, Stan Taylor and Lorne Wychunk. Front - Johnny Siska, Larry Frizzel.



Dixie Bill Hilton & The Calgary Range Riders. Bill Hilton, kneeling in front; Lucky Ambo, centre back. Rest unknown.



Larry Brennan, Roy Head, Bob Hilliard, Joe Firth, Mike Weber and Paul Weber.



The Hummingbirds - Lance Russwurm, Laura Russwurm, Lynn Russwurm and Dave Turner.



The Rhythm Masters - Curly Walker, Carl Kees, Fred Lembursun, Will Hawks and Stan Taylor.

Remember When ...

Hard to believe it's been 19 years or so since local Listowel playwright Paul Thompson staged a live theatre re-creation of the CKNX Barn Dance, called "Barn Dance Live", at the Blyth Festival Theatre. It was such a huge success in 1996 that it was brought back again in 1997. No doubt it was influential in helping to resurrect the current Barn Dance shows. Glad it did.

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COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown

(Toronto and surrounding area)

* **Appearances by Jessica Wedden**, a young fiddler, who does trick fiddling and step dancing, as follows: May 22-24 - Classic Country Music Jamboree at Way-Lin Farm, Roblin, 613-396-6802 waylin65@gmail.com; May 31 - Featured guest at Napanee Old Tye Fiddlers & Harrowsmith Odd Fellows & Rebekahs, dinner and dance, supporting Camp Trillium, camp for kids with cancer, 1 to 5 pm, Golden Links Hall, Harrowsmith, 613-546-3651; June 19-21, Hitchin Post Jamboree, Grafton, 905-349-3765, hitchin.post.jamboree@gmail.com; June 26 - Just Past The Pines Country and Bluegrass Jamboree, Deseronto, 613-396-3308.

* **Appearance by Dave Whalen** & The Starlites, April 12, 2 pm, RCL, Mississauga.

* **April 19** - Country Music Show at College Park 7 Day Adventist Church, Oshawa, with appearances by Debbie McLean, Steve Piticco, Don Reed, Dan Washburn and Andy Schick, Frank Woodcock and Kiley Jo Masson.

* **April 26** - Southwold Library Fundraiser, 2 pm, Southwold Keystone Complex, Shedd.

* **May 3** - Barn Dance Show, 2 pm, Purple Hill Country Hall, Thorndale.

* **May 22 to 24** - Annual Barn Dance Campout weekend, 18th year, Blyth camp grounds and arena, Blyth. Friday Bluegrass Show, 7 pm; Sat. afternoon open stage; Sat. 8 pm Barn Dance Stage Show, after show dance until midnight; Sun. 10 am Gospel Show. See you there!!

* **Classic Country Music Fans** - Hitchin Post Jamborees as follows: June 18-21 and also Aug. 6-9. Contact Al Martin 905-349-3745.

* **Appearances by Mickey Andrews** - RCL, Hensall Circle, Mississauga April 24, May 29 and June 26.

* **Purple Hill Opry House** - found it's home in the Taylor Auction Centre, 519-461-0538. www.purplehillcountryhall.com Line up as follows: May 3, The Barn Dance Show 2 pm, roast beef dinner 5 pm, MC Jim Swan, lineup Linsey Becket, and Dianne Ditner of the Country Cavaliers, Randy Satchell, Harold MacIntyre, Paul Weber, always a star studded show presented as the CKNX Barn Dance. **June 7**, East Coast Calling Show, 2 pm, with Fraser Newcombe, Roy Payne, 3 members of Carlton Show Band, Felex Thurret, Robert and Larres Benoit, step dancer Tiffany Fewster, Malcolm

Melanson and the Melanson Family Reunion Band. The Taylor Family of Purple Hill presents Down East Kitchen Party.

* **Appearances by Joe Tucker**: www.joetunckerband.com at RCL, Hensall Circle, Mississauga on May 17, 2 pm and July 13.

* **Appearances by Doreen Brown**: Thornton Jam, April 9; Blyth Campout Weekend, May 18 - 24; Rosemont, April 21; Tottenham Bluegrass Festival, June 19; Lindsay Country Jamboree, July 16.

* **June 19-21** - Tottenham Bluegrass Festival. Line up : Doyle Lawson & Quick Silver; Ray Legere & Acoustic Horizon; Little Roy & Lizzy Show; Rhyme N Reason; Barn Katz; The Emory Lester Band & Jill Jones Band; Marc Roy & Friends; Richard Dugal & Clear Sweep; Dan Campbell & Limited Edition; Bill White & Lone Pine; The Ducharme Family; Beeton Creek Rising.

* **Classic Country Music Reunion** - July 30-Aug. 2, 24th year, lineup pending. Centennial Park, Trenton.

* **Lindsay Country Jamboree** - July 16 - 19, 671-354 Angeline St. S., Lindsay, 705-741-6097 or 1-800-954-9998. The building shelters guests, vendors and entertainers. Rough camping sites on a first come basis, shuttle service. Shop, eat and listen to fantastic country music all at one time. Includes open mic from Thurs. to Sat. 1 to 5. Line-up includes Eddie Eastman, Chuck Simms, Mark Laforme, Fred Whell & Brandon Gillian, DJ Rowatt, Riki Knox, Wendy Lynn Snider; John Fraser, James Barker, Will Murray, Marion Drexler, Reg Benoit, Rebekah Stevens and Instant Rivalry. Several vendors to shop and enjoy all weekend.

* **Jamborees** - Thornton, upstairs in arena, second Thursday; Shelburne, upstairs in arena, second Sunday, roast beef dinner available; Holland Landing, 3rd Thursday; Bond Head, 4th Tuesday.

* **Commercial Tavern** - every second Wednesday night, featuring The Commercial Bluegrass Band.

* **Holstein Bluegrass Celebration**: Aug. 7 to 9, Love's Sugarbush, Holstein. Lineup includes Donna Ulisse & The Poor Mountain Boys; The Burie Family; Hard Ryde (host band); The Griddle Pickers; The Schotts; Acoustical Strings; Jim Hayward & Willowridge Bluegrass; Traditionally Wound and more TBA. 150 campsites, great food and lots of great music. Family oriented festival. Rough camping. Info 416-460-6489.

* **The Kitchen Party Jams** are exciting free music events held at numerous locations throughout Central and Southern Ontario. They are free events for all musicians and fans and include Country, Bluegrass, Folk, Celtic and Mixed Acoustic type. For further info, on various locations, schedules or to receive free monthly newsletters, contact Gerry Mitchell at 705-799-5008.

* **The Barrel Boys** are a new staple on the Toronto Bluegrass scene. Playing every Tuesday at the Cloak & Dagger Pub on College St, an Irish pub. Their tight harmonies, barn burning instruments and killer repertoire always keep the bar full and drinks flowing.

* **May 3** - 1 pm, CCMR Show and Dance with Katelyn Brant, RCL, Branch 43, Oshawa.

* **May 7** - 7 pm, presents Marty Stuart at the Academy Theatre, Lindsay. For tickets 705-324-9111.

* **June 27** - 2 pm, presents Charlie Pride at Centre In The Square. Tickets www.rocklandsentertainment.com

* **Sept. 3 - 6** - The 11th annual Auction Barn Jamboree, Colborne.

* **Sept. 1 - 2** - The Heart of Texas Show with Darren McCall, Amber Digby, Tony Booth, Mona McCall at the Keeler Centre, 80 Division St., Colborne.

* **July 23 - 26** - Pickin' In The Pond, Shelburne.

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BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

Tom T. Hall records have always been a tonic to both my brain and my soul.

His signature 1972 #1 hit "Old Dogs, Children, and Watermelon Wine" endlessly fascinated me as a kid as story, song, and sermon. I have been paying attention to his words ever since.

Whether it be the simple poetic genius of "I Love" or the devastatingly mature themes of "Homecoming" or "Margie's at the Lincoln Park Inn," I find myself considering his lyrics well beyond the two-and-a-half minutes it takes to listen to most of them.

Most recently I have been tuned in to the 1979 RCA album *Ol' T's in Town*. The collection of ten songs begins with "The Last Country Song." The line that has me thinking is: "And there will be no more steel guitars and fiddle/If the people don't know what they are worth."

Listening to much of contemporary country music suggests its listeners no longer know the worth of either instrument. The steel guitars and fiddles are often hard to hear. Their silence speaks to their devalued currency. As Hall predicted, they are essentially no more.

As usual, Hall withholds judgement or comment. He just made an observation almost forty years ago. We are now left to wonder today what it may all mean and what the fiddle and steel guitar are worth - if anything - in the here and now.

Have we heard the last country song? What does that even mean? I know Blake Shelton recorded a song on his 2007 Warner Brother's release *Pure BS* also titled "The Last Country Song." If we can take anything from that it might be that the last country song refuses to, in fact, be the last. It must count for something that Shelton co-wrote his song with Country Music Hall of Fame songwriter Bobby Braddock. That two of country music's greatest vocalists, John Anderson and George Jones, are featured

on the track must also be significant of something.

But what?

I like to believe it is the same spirit of preservation that is at the heart of the Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum. It is that timeless game of catch being played by the past and the present. Preservation of the past wears the glove on one hand and promotion of the new - who may or may not know the value of the steel guitar and fiddle - wears the glove on the other hand. Things get all out of wack if one side holds the ball too long.

If you really want to hurt your head, try and figure out what Hall means when, in a later verse, he also bids goodbye to the mandolins and banjos, and says "St. John has torn us apart."

The last country song - or the threat of losing the past -- is now apparently of potential biblical significance. Hillbilly heaven has been torn apart. Is what is at stake new beginnings or the end times?

COME JOIN US!!

We need you as a member of

THE BARN DANCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY and ENTERTAINMENT MUSEUM

P. O. Box 68, Wingham, Ont. N0G 2W0 Phone: (519) 530-8000 E-mail: webmaster@thebardance.ca

Membership is still only \$25.00 per year.

As a member you will receive:

- A personalized MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE and CARD.
- The right to VOTE at our annual meetings.
- Advance notice of SPECIAL EVENTS.
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