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# The Barn Dance Opera Journal



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**Vol. 85 2015**

**Summer Edition**

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## Earl Fries & The Chaparral's

by Lynn Russwurm

The young man working in the coat check room and serving as a general handyman at the Bridgeport Casino was soaking up as much country music as he could. In the late forties and the early fifties, the Bridgeport Casino was the hot spot for country music in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. With regular dances on Wed., Fri. and Sat. night and usually to full houses; this was the main objective for young musicians to aim their guitars at. Regular bands were Roy Thompson & The Westernaires on Wed. and Sat.; with Don Reinhart & The Tumbleweed Troubadours holding forth on Fri. On odd occasions extra attractions were brought in, such as The CKNX Barn Dance and special appearances by Earl Heywood and The Barn Dance Gang, or Jack Kingston & The Mainstreeters. I recall special nights with Clarence Petrie & The Nighthawks, also shows by Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper and Andy Reynolds & The 101 Ranch Boys.

When our young friend saw Earl and Martha Heywood arrive in all their country music splendor, he thought to himself "That's what I want to do for a living". When the singer / guitarist for the Westernaires quit to further his music elsewhere, young Earl Fries lost no time to audition for the vacant spot. He soon got a taste of a musicians life as the first night he was to play a date, Hurricane Hazel came to town. With The Westernaires, Earl whetted his appe-

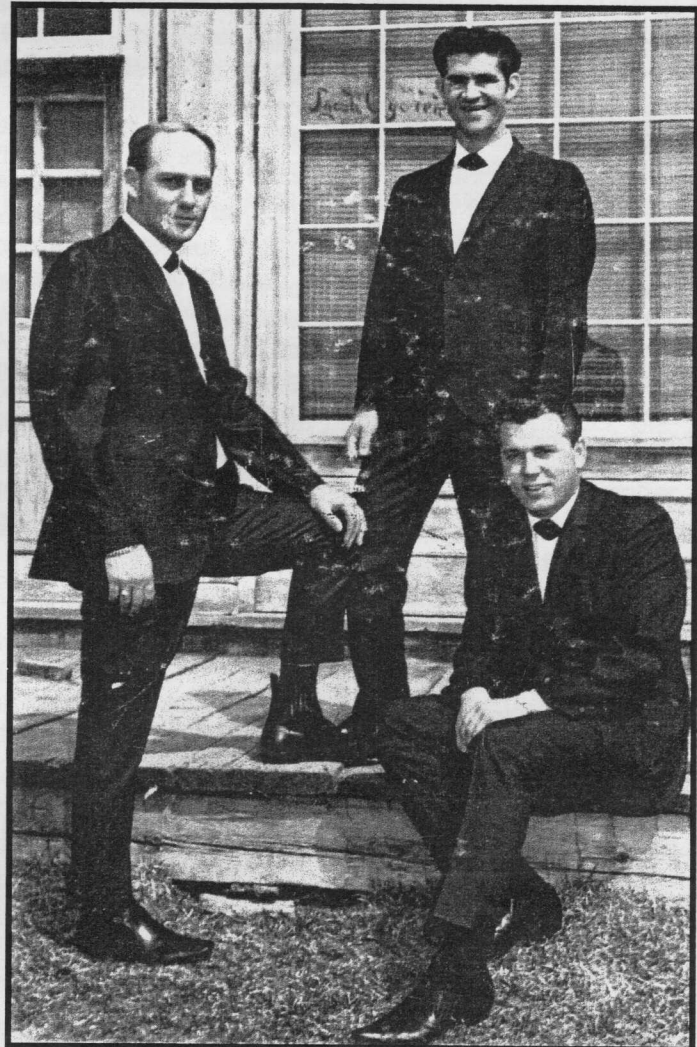
tite for the music he loved. They appeared on CBC-TV on "Pick The Stars" and won on their first appearance, however they were eliminated in the second round. As time went on they enlisted George Matheson as manager and under his guidance they hosted three separate TV series on CKCO-TV after a name change to The Silver Bar Ranch Boys.

Finally, The Silver Bar Ranch Boys packed it in and Earl found a spot entertaining in Mitchell with Wayne Riehl and Len Love on a six night a week deal, Earl found this to be a heavy load along with working a full time job at Greb Shoes.

There was a local band, The Rhythm Masters, who worked as the house band at the Edison Hotel in Toronto, and when they decided to call it quits two of their members got together with Earl for form The Chaparrals. This was Carl Kees and Fred Emberson and with this group a lot of doors opened up.

They took over the house band gig at the Edison,; they made two tours of the far East, playing army bases in Japan, Thailand, etc. They did nine years at the Calgary Stampede playing a number of prestige bars. Then came the day Carl Kees got an offer to join the fabulous Good Bros. as a fiddler.

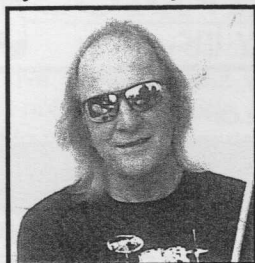
*Continued on Page 3*



**THE CHAPARRALS**

## The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



Okay, spring has sprung and summer is now upon us. I'm still getting over that darned used snowblower I bought last winter which only worked once. My arms are still sore but at least the snow is gone ... for now.

Spring has been quite busy for Barn Dance shows and I'm proud to say that every show was a full house. Musical Director, Doug Dietrich and the Barn Dance band members, as well as those on the Barn Dance Historical Society Board and our volunteer staff deserve a standing ovation. Without their hard work and dedication these shows just wouldn't happen. It's a good feeling to know people are talking about the Barn Dance and how much they look forward to each and every show. It speaks volumes about the talent and those in charge of keeping the music and shows alive.

I have been fortunate to have the position of 'house drummer/vocalist' at the ever popular Commercial Tavern in Maryhill, operated by country performer/owner Paul Weber. And by the way, it really is the home of true country music. Recently, I attended a couple of Sunday shows at the Commercial. The Good Brothers performed there this spring and I went out with some musician friends to check them out as I hadn't seen them in years. Great 'old timey' wholesome entertainment pretty much sums up the Good Brothers. The careers of Brian, Bruce, and Larry Good span decades and they still retain their sweet sibling harmonies and 'good time' approach to their stage show. Undeniably Canadian, the Good Brothers have travelled the world, received many awards and retained their 'down home' roots and flavour in their musical performance. They never fail to please an audience and they were right at home in their element at the Commercial in

Maryhill.

T.V. personality and entertainer, Gordie Tapp also performed recently at a Sunday afternoon show in Maryhill. Gordie's T.V. career started with the Main Street Jamboree in Hamilton, then Country Hoedown on CBC which soon became the Tommy Hunter Show. His big claim to fame was south of the border when Gordie became a regular performer on the popular Hee Haw series which ran for 5 years and many more after that in syndication. Gordie had a packed house the day I arrived at the Commercial and at the young age of 93 he can still hold the attention of an audience. As always, he made time for fans who wanted a picture or just to talk and shake his hand. True to form, Gordie is one of a kind.

A big screen was used showing early TV shows etc. as Gordie talked about his career from the beginning up until today. He used a lot of the same jokes but that didn't matter because he still knows how to make people laugh. And laugh they did. He may be 'old school' but his charm and simple country bumpkin attitude are what people appreciate. Genuine, personable, and corny pretty much sums up Gordie Tapp. And he still looks pretty good for his age.

I spoke with Gordie before the show and he still remembered my mom's bran muffins he used to love when he visited our house. You see Gordie was a cousin of my dad (Earl Heywood) and they used to hang out together and work on the farm in Exeter, Ontario. When Gordie wanted to go to Lorne Greene's broadcasting school in London, he needed money and sold his old Martin 0018 to my dad. Ever since that day he always hounded my dad about wanting him to sell that guitar back to him. It was a standing joke as dad had no intentions of selling the guitar back to Gordie ... especially since it said Earl Heywood on the neck. They always used to laugh about that and the times they spent together on the farm and onstage.

I can remember back in the mid 90's when I performed with my band 'The Desert Dolphins' at the Fair Convention at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto. It was a special moment as Gordie and my dad were both there that

## The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment

### Museum

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(or leave a message)

**BARN DANCE WEBSITE:**

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### Earl Heywood

*Founder and Honourary President*

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and Lynn Russwurm.

day. Gordie said, "Earl, why don't I do an opening monologue and then bring you onstage, and then you can introduce your son's band to the audience.' Wow! That was about as good as it gets. I'll remember and treasure that day forever.

Memories are made of moments such as that but you can make your own memories by attending a Barn Dance Show and re-live the nostalgia of a real Barn Dance performance of traditional country music. Hope you can make it to the next Barn Dance Show. We'd love to see you there.

Comments? Please contact:

Grant Heywood

5584 Deborah Glaister Line,

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Phone: (519) 656-2552

E-mail: [heywoods@xplornet.ca](mailto:heywoods@xplornet.ca)

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## 2015 COMING EVENTS

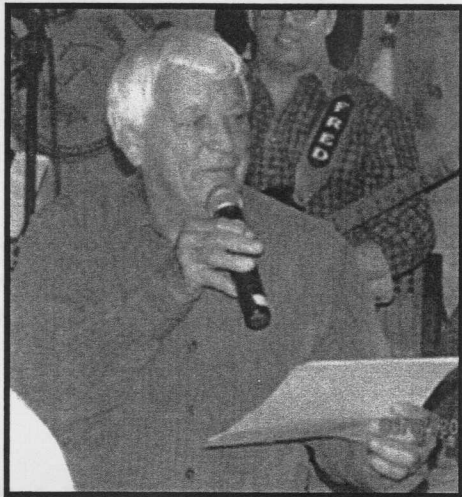
Date	Event Name	Place
Tues., July 14	Barn Dance Show - 7:30 p.m.	Bach Festival, Exeter
Sun., Sept. 20	Barn Dance Show - 3:00 p.m.	Melville Presbyterian Church, Brussels
Sun., Oct. 25	Barn Dance Show - 2:00 p.m.	Hanover Civic Theatre, Hanover
Sun., Nov. 15	Barn Dance Show - 2:30 p.m.	Brigden Fairgrounds, Brigden
Sun., April 10, 2016	Barn Dance Show - 2:30 p.m.	Lucan Area Heritage Society, Lucan Comm. Complex



*Continued from Page 1*

Meanwhile Earl's 3 sons, Greg, Guy and Todd had organized the Mini Chaparrals with daughter Sharon on Vocals, while still in school. By the time Carl left the group the kids moved up the ladder and became the Chaparrals, with Earl, and continued to play the local bars.

Today they are very selective in what dates they take on, such as an occasional gig at Paul Weber's Commercial Hotel in Maryhill; a monthly appearance at the Waterloo Rod and Gun Club throughout the winter season; or the Sunday Night Concerts in Elmira. After the original Chaparrals, Earl re-entered the work force, working for Koch Transport. Today he enjoys retirement from his cottage, but the lure of entertaining is still strong along with all the aches and pains. Personally I've had the pleasure of knowing Earl for many years and sharing the odd gig with him. By the way I was the singer Earl replaced with the Westernaires in 1954, so I feel I was instrumental in giving Earl a place to start. Good luck, Pal.



*Earl Fries making a speech after receiving his Barn Dance Pioneer Award at a recent Barn Dance in Maryhill.*

*Earl was obviously taken by surprise by the B.D. Pioneer Award and very humbled as well.*

## FEATURE C. D. REVIEW

### "The View From Here"

#### *The Beckett's*

*by Grant Heywood*

The Beckett Family of Owen Sound are well known in south western Ontario and beyond. So it's no surprise that their now 'grown up' siblings, Linsey and Tyler should release a c.d., with 15 songs no less! Incorporating some of the best musicians around including Dad John Beckett, Grandpa Stan Beckett, Steve Piticco, Ken Post, Mel Aucoin,



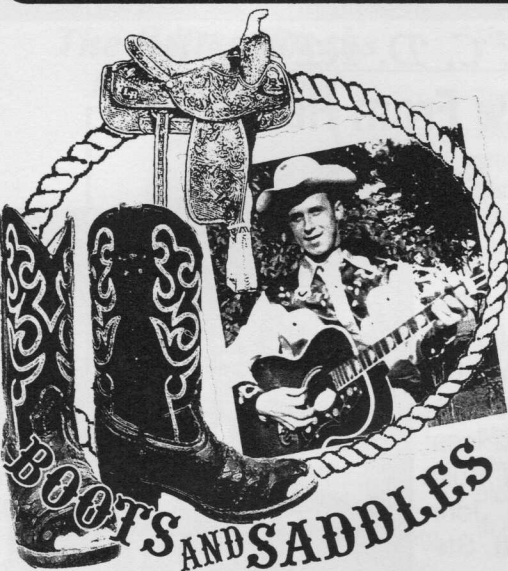
Doug Johnson and Kerry Adams, speaks volumes about this recording. It was recorded in Oshawa at Doug Devaux's Sideman Studio. Doug's fine reputation speaks for itself.

The twin fiddles of Linsey and Tyler are threaded amongst all of the 15 tunes here, including Don Messer's Breakdown and starting off with Graham Townsend's 'Gilles Roy / The Girl I Left Behind Me'. Tyler sings on 'Back On My Mind' and the popular Fred Rose western swing song 'Deep Water'. Linsey also sings on a couple of songs, including, the Bob Wills tune, 'Bubbles In My Beer' and the zesty Brad Paisley song 'Make A Mistake'. Grandpa Stan Beckett gets a cameo on fiddle with the traditional 'Over The Waves'.

Outstanding cuts include 'Our Waltz', one of the sweetest waltz's I've ever heard, also the Larry Stacey Breakdown / Carm Butchart Reel, both of whom I've had the pleasure of working with. My favourites on this c.d., 'Estrellita', a soft, European jazz-like number, that flows effortlessly with the texture smooth bowing of Linsey and Tyler. Hot licks by guitarist Steve Piticco, steel player Doug Johnson, pianist Mel Aucoin, and drummer Ken Post, abound in the quick paced 'Make A Mistake'. The twin fiddles really shine in the Spanish number 'El Cumbanchero', but Linsey and Tyler save the best for last when they perform the traditional and most stunning, 'Water Is Wide'. I think this song alone is worth the price of the c.d. and I'm not kidding!

Linsey and Tyler's mom Mavis did some of the c.d. photography and production and arrangements were handled by the Beckett's and Linsey and Tyler. This is a c.d. to be proud of and I have no doubt would be enjoyed by anyone who appreciates the very best fiddle playing Canada has to offer. All the fiddling/violin elements are in this c.d. so what can I say but great job Linsey and Tyler. I'm hooked and most definitely a fan.

For information about The Beckett's, Linsey & Tyler, or how to purchase this c.d., please contact: [linsey.beckett@hotmail.com](mailto:linsey.beckett@hotmail.com)



by Lynn Russwurm

By the time you read this, we'll have survived another Barn Dance Camp-Out in Blyth. Everything went smoothly through the efforts of team members Gord and Ruth Baxter and camp-out chairman Bill Simmermaker. The amount of work these people put into the campout is incredible and shows in the final results. And they'll be the first to give credit to all the volunteers that make it look easy.

With summertime at hand you should try to attend at least one of the bluegrass of Country Festivals that abound almost every week; there's sure to be one not too far away from wherever you are. A few that come to

mind are Holstein and Tottenham, a good time to be had by all.

Or maybe you want to attend one of the Sunday concerts at Maryhill on special occasions, or maybe at Purple Hill. I want to blow my horn for my own Sunday night concerts, every Sunday night until the end of August. We have many of the top country and bluegrass bands in Canada booked in for this season. As of this writing the first one on May 31 by Steve Pittico and South Mountain was cancelled by rain and cold weather but not the following schedule:

June 7 - Commercial Bluegrass

#### Band

June 14 - Moonshiner's Daughter

June 21 - The Two Plus Who

June 28 - Southbound

July 5 - Rural Appetite

July 12 - Grass Tax

July 19 - Earl Fries & The Chaparrals

July 26 - Ridin' High

Aug. 2 - Peace River Band

Aug. 9 The Burie Family

Aug. 16 - Gerald Davidson & The Country Versatiles

Aug. 23 - Doug Dietrich & Sunrise

Aug. 30 - Dickie Dugal & U-Turn

You will note the article on Earl Fries in this issue, Earl and The Chaparrals draw standing room only at most of the venues they play. If you

know your bands, you will agree with me that there isn't a weak one in the bunch. As with all outdoor events, we are at the mercy of the weather. As in the case of Steve Pittico on May 31, we had to cancel when the weather man predicted rain for the whole day. Steve's band members come from various points and we had to give them sufficient time to change their plans. Steve comes from Brighton, Linsey Beckett hails from Owen Sound, Kurt Bernard from Hamilton, with Jay Riehl coming from Gadshill. The weather might be bad at 4 o'clock so you make the decision to cancel then at 5:30 the sun breaks through and people wonder why you've cancelled. Our situation is great, the Township gives us the band shell at no cost, the Woolwich Observer sponsors us with all the advertising and we owe them a big thank you for that. So the collection goes to the band, I wonder if you realize that for your contribution you are getting a \$20 - \$25 concert. And the bands take the chance of being rained out and going home with nothing. However, they all like playing at this venue as the crowds are so warm and receptive.

As for me it's a great pleasure to provide this venue for all the great musicians we have in this country, many have become good friends - a friendship that I treasure.



COMMERCIAL BLUEGRASS BAND - l to r: Ron Beingessner (dobro), Glen George (bass), Dickie Dugal (vocals and guitar), Dan Howlett (fiddle) and Larry Johnston (banjo).

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# More Pictures from the 18th Annual Blyth Barn Dance Campout Jamboree



CAMPER'S JAM



PEACE RIVER BAND

### BARN DANCE SOUVENIRS

Please go to [www.thebarndance.ca](http://www.thebarndance.ca) for a full list of Barn Dance Souvenirs.

## IN MEMORIAM



**SARAH STEPHENSON** - (original Barn dance performer know as Little Sarah Cruickshank) of Brussels, passed away at Huronlea Home for the Aged on Tuesday, April 28. Born in Wingham on Jan. 4, 1923, Sarah was in her 93rd year. Sarah was the beloved wife of the late Frederic Mac `Dick` Stephenson and will be sadly missed by her daughter in law, Sharon Stephenson of Brussels, her grand daughters Corrinna Strong and her husband Peter of Mississauga, and Chantelle den Dekker and her husband Arnold of Brussels, and her great grandchildren, Connor, Megan, Kennedy, MacKenzie, Ryan, Jessica and Laura. Also loved by her sisters in law Nora Stephenson, Liz and Ken Sholdice and Shirley Wilken. Predeceased by her son Frederick, her grand daughters Rhonda and Charlene, her parents George and Linda (Hill) Cruickshank, her brothers Jim, Tom and Calvin, and sisters Elizabeth, Ivey and Margaret.

Condolences to family and friends of Sarah from the Barn Dance Historical Society.

## DRAW WINNERS

These are the winners of our draws held at the Barn Dance Jamboree / Campout Weekend in May ~

**SHARE THE WEALTH DRAW - Fri., May 22, 2015**

Penny Sawyer, Port Stanley; and Lawrence Wakefield, Wy.

**SHARE THE WEALTH DRAW - Sat., May 23, 2015**

Shirley Mels, Waterford; and Jack Hackett, Kincardine.

**GUITAR WINNER -**

Tristan Dahl, Ingersoll, ON.



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# Country Music Memories

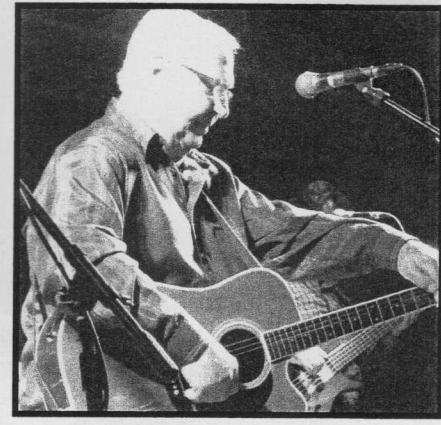
*Pictures from the 18th Annual Blyth Barn Dance Campout Jamboree*



*PAUL NEWELL*



*SUE WEBER BELL*



*BILL MURRAY*



*FRIDAY JAM*



*LINSEY BECKETT*



*KYLIE JOE MASSON*

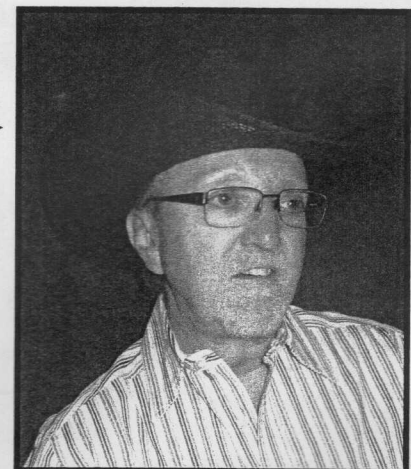
*BILL SIMMERMAKER,  
BLYTH BARN DANCE  
DIRECTOR / CO-ORDINATOR*

## BOOKING THE BARN DANCE

*If you are interested in  
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Wingham, Ont. N0G 2W0;  
or call ~ (519) 530-8000*

*E-mail: [webmaster@thebardance.ca](mailto:webmaster@thebardance.ca)*





## COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown

(Toronto and surrounding area)

- \* **July 2 - 5** - Holyrood Country Jamboree. 513-967-9551. holyroodcountryjamboree.com; 3rd Quyon Jamfest www.quyonjamfest.ca
- \* **July 10 - 12** - 10th Preston Springs Country Jamboree, Hastings. 705-696-2268. www.prestonsprings.ca
- \* **July 14** - Barn Dance Show band, with Grant Heywood on drums, Al Alderson on Bass, Bill Norris fiddle, Fred Lewis lead guitar and Doug Dietrich on steel guitar. Performance at Back Festival Canada, Exeter, 8 p.m. Also same bank on Sept. 20 at Melville Presbyterian Church, Brussels at 2:30 p.m.
- \* **July 16 - 19** - Lindsay Country Jamboree, 800-954-9998. lindsaycountryjamboree.com Location Hwy. 7, 354 Angeline St. S., Lindsay. Includes rough camping. Featuring DJ Rowatt; James Barker, Will Murray, Marion Drexler, Jason Martin, Riki Knox, Wendy Lynn Snider, John Fraser, Eddie Eastman, Reg Benoit, Brendan Gillam and Fred White, Chuck Simms. Gospel Hour featuring Louise Wright, Rebekah Stevens. A fun filled weekend with guests, entertainers, vendors and open mic.
- \* **July 17 - 19** - Queen's Bush Bluegrass Club annual bluegrass campout, Kilsyth Country Campground, 15 min. south of Owen Sound. Rough camping, rain or shine. Pay at gate weekend pass \$40.00 per person. Line up: Traditionally Wound, Winterline, Thyme-n-reason, Grassfyre Sweetgrass, Black and Bluegrass, Riverbed Gentlemen, Blurry Pickers, Griddle Pickers.
- \* **July 23 to 26** - Mark your calendars. Fiddle Park, Shelburne. Bring your lawn chairs and musical instruments. Trailer Trash Yard Sale on Sat. morning. \$35 per person for the weekend or \$10 daily. Proceeds for Fiddle Park improvement. For info contact Greg Holmes 519-925-2696.
- \* **July 23** - Napanee Country Jamboree, 613-476-6535; Also Palmer Rapids Twin Music Festival, 613-758-2747.
- \* **Appearances by Valerie Wedden** - 613-770-6340 or www.jessicawedden.ca
- \* **July 30 - Aug. 3** - 24th Classic Country Music Reunion and Jamboree, Centennial Park, Trenton. Main stage line-up Fri: Darlene Brooks, Gavin Gartsjpre, John Lester, Al Marshall and Barb Morrison, Julie Simpson, Stompin'Jon, Host Bill Warner; Sat. Gerald

Davidson, Lorraine Marie, Arden McGill, Bonita Mercer, James Rice, Host John Lester; Sun. morning gospel show 11 am Host Dave Wells; 6:30 pm Harold McIntyre, Dan Paul Rogers, Joanne Post, Host Barb Grenier. Sound Doug Deveau, Back up band The Tim Saunders Band. 2016 will be the 25th Anniversary of our Classic Country Music Reunion.

\* **Upcoming fiddle music and square dance events:** contact Ralph Rice, ralphsandyprice@sympatico.ca

\* **For shows and appearances:** contact The Taylor Auction Centre, 519-461-0538, www.purplehillcountryhall.com

\* **Aug. 6 - 9:** Hitchin Post Jamboree, 905-349-3765; **Aug. 7 - 9:** Old Enterprise Country Jamboree, 613-379-9972; **Aug. 8:** Fort Stewart Jamboree, 613-332-6605.

\* **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. Campsites, great food and lots of great music. Family oriented festival. Rough camping. Info 416-460-6489.

\* **Appearances by Doreen Brown:** Shows mentioned above - Tottenham Bluegrass, Lindsay Country Jamboree, Pickin in the Park, TBA.

\* **Havelock Country Jamboree 2015** - Aug. 11 - 16. Lineup: Aug. 11 - Cold Creek Country, Autumn Hill, Stampedeers, Brett Kissel, Ambush; Aug. 14 - The James Barker Band, Instant Rivalry, Russel DeCarl, Jason D. Williams; supper hour - Joe Diffie, Tany Tucker, Clint Clack, Mustang Sally; Aug. 15 - Uncle Sean and the Shifty Drifters; Me and Mae, The Good Brothers, John Cafferty and The Beaver Brown Band; supper hour - Cor Blund, Gord Bamford, Big and Rich featuring Cowboy Troy, Wes Mack; Aug. 16 -

Narrow Road, Jack Connolly, Emisunshine, Henry Norwood, Rhonda Vincent, Corduroy Road, The Zapletals.

\* **Bond Head Fiddle Club** - at community hall, Hwys. 27 and 88, the fourth Tuesday of the month, year round.

\* **Michael T. Wall** - is the first Canadian to be asked to donate a guitar to the Australian Country Music Hall of Fame as reported on The Big Al Field Radio Show. Michael donated a white Fender guitar, bearing the Canadian and Australian flags. Michael is a true Canadian country music ambassador, who has promoted many Canadian artists over the years and also has promoted Australian well know artists, some now deceased.

\* **Sept. 5** - Virginia Town Country Jamboree, 705-634-2145 or 705-962-0711. Entertainers include Jessie Stack, Mellow Lilly, Dennis Whitty, Johnny Burke and Crystal Shawanda.

\* **Sept. 10 - 13** - Marmora Country Jamboree. 613-395-0774.

\* **Holland Landing:** is the third Thursday of the month. Jam session and dance starts at 7 pm. 905-473-7072.

\* **Sept. 1 - 2** - The Heart of Texas Show at the Auction Barn, 80 Division St., Colborne, at Keeler Centre. Entertainers - Daren McCall, Amber Digby, Tony Booth and Mona McCall.

\* **Sept. 3 - 6** - Auction Barn Jamboree, 11th annual. Check website for further information.

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# BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

I love debates about what is, and what is not, country music. I think being forced to consider categories pushes us beyond them. If nothing else, it just gets people fired up and willing to talk about their passions.

As I write this, I am listening to an on-line recording of the 1960 album *Town & Country* cut by The Browns. This was an influential record from my childhood.

The Browns were a trio made up of Jim Ed Brown and his sisters Maxine and Bonnie Brown. Guest spots on Ernest Tubb's radio show, performances on the *Louisiana Hayride*, and the ABC television show *Ozark Jubilee* suggest a familiar country pedigree. That their sound was decidedly pop explains why they also appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *American Bandstand*. The Browns joined *The Grand Ole Opry* in 1963. They were inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in March

2015. Listen to their music, however, and one is left wondering if The Browns are merely a pop outfit with country credentials. The proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing.

Wonderfully, it didn't matter to the listening audience then anymore than it does to me now. I use The Browns as an example because we unfortunately lost Jim Ed Brown to cancer on June 11, 2015. We have had the opportunity to be reminded of his cross-over musical legacy.

Today, another artists is similarly challenging our perhaps too-neat country categories. Sam Hunt's *Montevallo* is a talking/shouting point. Hunt is the first artist since Billy Ray Cyrus to top three country charts simultaneously. That his music is hugely popular is not under debate. Whether or not he is country by anything other than name is.

The hip hop beats and percussive electronic dance music rhythms will not be familiar to a traditionalists ears. The narratives and characters in the songs will be. In a *Rolling Stone* interview Hunt said, "I do think I'm country. But your definition of that word might be different

from my definition. In my opinion, country music, the sound of country, has always evolved. But the one thing that has not changed is the story element. And I think country songs are truthful songs about life written by country people."

I know my young boys have responded to the album, and the songs, like no other. It is striking a chord in their developing musical identity. I am grateful for that. The album may matter for them like *The Browns Town & Country* mattered for me.

I mention all of this in the *Barn Dance Opera Journal* because I believe experiencing country music out here on the edges of the genre is important to preserving its core. As Bill Monroe observed, sometimes you have to come hither to go yonder.

As much as I want the young country listeners to know the history of the Barn Dance and attend its ongoing performances, I want readers of this journal to listen to what is considered country music today and get talking!

## COME JOIN US!!

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