



THE BARN DANCE OPERA JOURNAL

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REMEMBERING MY FRIEND, RON COULTHARD

by Grant Heywood



Barn Dance steel player, Ron Coulthard

I first saw Ron Coulthard playing steel guitar on CKNX TV's, Circle 8 Ranch, in the early 1960's. How was I to know that later in life, we would become close friends and colleagues.

Ron served as the longest running Secretary/Treasure for Stratford local 418 of the AFM

musician's union. I was eventually elected to the executive board and soon served almost 25 years as President of local 418. Both Ron and I were on the Barn Dance Historical Society board of directors. We also played in the Barn Dance Band together for countless shows. I

looked up to Ron as he was older and experienced, and I was getting older, but still gaining experience.

But we always enjoyed performing music together onstage, and many studio sessions. We always had a mutual admiration for each other's musical talents. Ron was so versatile, playing steel, banjo, piano, guitar, and even organ at church. His love and comprehension of Hawaiian guitar spilled over to steel guitar. He and his wife Ann, we're also good friends of my parents, Earl & Martha.

It was on our many travels to music conventions and conferences that we really bonded as friends. At a music conference, in Lowell, Mass, Ron & I arrived early to our hotel from the airport. Our colleagues from other union locals kept motioning for us to come over to the bar. But we just sat at the table nursing our beers, and suddenly realized that Tom Jones was at the bar having a few pints with the guys. He was starting his North American tour the next night in Boston, Go figure. It was also at Lowell, Mass., where I met my good friend, Vermont's very own Western swing star, Rick Norcross. We've been buddies ever since.

Continued on Page 3



The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood

Summer is now upon us and things are starting to warm up. Covid is still around but greatly diminished, and folks are now going about their daily routine, albeit after experiencing over two years of what seemed like self isolation of sorts. If there are two things that transcend our human nature in this world, it is love and hope. Without those two things, our world wouldn't be the same.

Coming out of this pandemic period has been a hard for many of us. Not being able to gather with friends and loved ones, losing friends and loved ones, and coping with all of it has put a strain on our mental health. After what everyone has been through, please remember to be kind and considerate to others. Their struggles may be 10 times what you have endured.

Now that the world seems to be cautiously opening up, many are planning some travel time over the summer. We recently returned from a weeklong vacation to Vermont, Maine, and Boston, Massachusetts. It almost felt liberating, to say the least, just to get away on a road trip to somewhere different. I visited with my good friend Rick Norcross, of 'Rick & the Ramblers' fame, in Burlington, Vermont. After 4 years, it felt so good to visit and chat with a very dear friend. We laughed about old times and caught up on new things in our lives. It felt really good to be in that zone again.

Then we drove through New Hampshire and onto Maine for a seaside lobster feast at Kittery Point, just north of Portsmouth. It's a favourite spot at Chauncey's, just where the river opens up to the ocean. They bring fresh lobster to the adjacent

dock daily, so you get to choose the size of lobster you want. We then proceeded to Boston, Mass., and stayed in Woburn, an area of north Boston. One of the oldest Italian restaurants, Pollcari's (since 1926) is nearby. They serve the best authentic Boston pizza bar none! It was definitely pizza heaven.

We took the subway into downtown Boston, and then the 2 ½ hour trolley tour to get around the city. If you've never been to Boston, it's a beautiful seaside city, rife with early American history and architecture, mixed in with ultra modern high rise towers. We had to pull over by the Berkely School of Music to let a police escorted tour bus go by. It happened to be Paul McCartney on his way to a 2 night concert in Boston. Another bus drove by as well, without police escorts... it was the band bus. Go figure. LOL

We had great weather everyday and avoided the tourist rush as we planned our vacation just before school finishes for summer break. Much to see in Boston as we passed the famous Cheers Bar, Paul Revere's residence, cemetery of early famous Americans, the 3 masted Constitution warship, Quincy's Market by the wharf, American Revolutionary monuments, the Boston Tea Party Museum, the Freedom Trail, etc. we even had a huge wild turkey show up in the parking lot of our hotel. Right in the midst of suburbia, this turkey could have fed a family of 30 easily. No wonder when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, (nearby) had turkey at Thanksgiving. This thing was the size of a Condor, or even Big Bird on Sesame Street. LOL

Driving through Vermont and north Massachusetts was beautiful. So many trees, mountains and lakes make it so picturesque. By driving some of the backroads, you really get to take in the small towns and beauty of the area. We stayed in the capitol of New York, Albany, the following night, and proceeded to Niag-

ara Falls New York, next day, for a bit of shopping. Aaaaah it was a well deserved holiday. I must thank my daughter and son in law for doing most of the driving. It was like having a limo driver or chauffeur.

If you want to take a beautiful short trip in Ontario sometime, then consider Drayton, Ontario. The next Barn Dance Show will be performing at the Drayton Theatre on Saturday, July 23d. Tickets are available at: Drayton entertainment.com Or go to Drayton Festival Theatre Barn Dance Show. Hope to see you at the next Barn Dance.

Comments? Please contact:

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or send a message on Facebook.

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(or leave a message)

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Earl Heywood

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2022 COMING EVENTS

Date	Event Name	Place
Sat., July 23, 2022	Barn Dance Show 2:00pm - 7:00pm	Drayton Festival Theatre, Drayton, ON
Sat., Sept. 17, 2022	Barn Dance Show	Elma-Logan Arena, Monkton
Sun., Nov. 13, 2022	Barn Dance Show	Wingham Town Hall Centre, Wingham, ON
Date T.B.D	Final Campout Jamboree	Blyth Arena & Campgrounds, Blyth, ON

Continued on Page 1

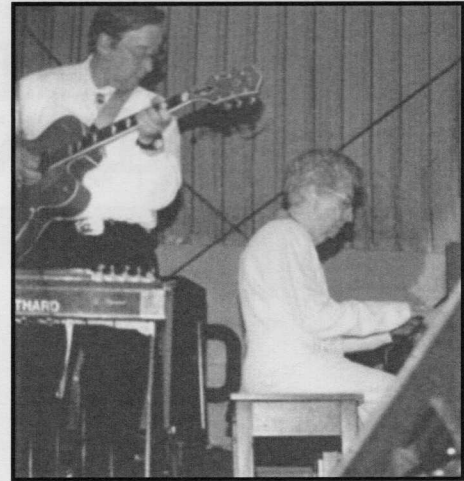
On our first trip to a convention in Vegas, Ron and I walked both sides of the strip in one day! We took in a heavy guitar rock show at the House of Blues, at Mandalay Bay, featuring super rock guitarists, Steve Vai, Joe Satriani, & John Petrucci. After getting our ears blasted, Ron casually said, "Well those guys certainly know their way around a guitar neck". Ron was impressed, even though he wasn't a rock aficionado.

Another time in Vegas, we visited Bobby Kingston, son of early Barn Dance pioneer, Jack Kingston. We visited Bobby's ranch house and studio, and even drove to Death Valley to hear him perform with his country band. We got back to Vegas with barely enough time to make our flight back home. On our way to the plane we quickly doubled back to pick up Ron's sports jacket he had left at the rental car office. Needless to say we missed our flight and spent another night in the city of lights.

Next a.m. we caught a connecting flight in Phoenix. After giving up our boarding passes we waited 2 hours and had to switch planes. Seems like our Southwest Airlines plane had caught fire. They hustled us off

across the tarmac to an Air Canada flight to Toronto. Then they wouldn't let us on the Air Canada plane because we gave up our boarding passes. With much arguing, they finally let us on and we eventually arrived in Toronto. We went to the carousel to pick up our luggage and waited, and waited, and waited... but no luggage. They sent our luggage to Pittsburgh by mistake. It was a few days later when our luggage arrived at our doorstep. What a comedy of errors, but always a new experience with Ron.

There were other trips, meetings, and performances together onstage, as well. It was always an adventure with Ron, and I'll always remember him forever being young at heart. Many times at meetings, he was the voice of reason. Ron was very knowledgeable, and was optimistic even when his health was failing. He loved his family, music, and friends, especially his cantor and sincerity. He is one of the last of the 'old guard', from the Barn Dance days gone by. I will always treasure our time together, and I will miss him a lot.



Ron Coulthard with his trusty Gretsch guitar, and piano player, Cora Robertson.



Ron Coulthard, and singer, Mary Elliott, waiting to appear on a Barn Dance Gospel Show.



Performing on the Barn Dance stage, Ron Coulthard on piano, while guitarist, Hughie Elder looks on.



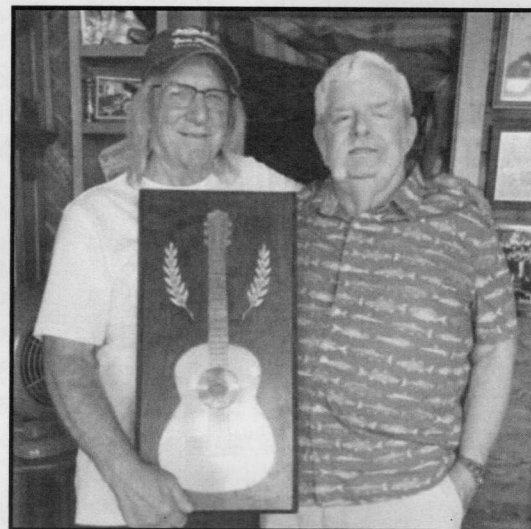
One of the versions of the Barn Dance Band. From L to R - Ron Coulthard, Hughie Elder, Royce Riehl, Victor Pasowisty, Bruce Robertson, Grant Heywood.

CATCHING UP WITH A VERY TALENTED FRIEND

by Grant Heywood



Rick & the Ramblers, early 50's, Flxible tour bus, 'The Mighty Pickle', now owned by country music legend, Marty Stuart. This is a picture of the newly refurbished bus renamed 'The Chief' by Marty.



Grant Heywood & Rick Norcross, with the Johnny Horton Award for 1/4 million record sales of North To Alaska.

I haven't seen my good friend, Rick Norcross for almost 4 years. Rick is the talented singer/songwriter & leader of Vermont's award winning Western swing band, Rick & the Ramblers. The band has several albums to their credit, including the title cut to Green Mountain Standard Time, penned by Norcross & Heywood.

It was a joy to visit Rick, if only for a brief moment, as he was involved with a TV production with band mate Taryn Noelle. Like everyone else, The Ramblers haven't been playing because of the pandemic, but award nominations and radio airplay still keeps the music of the band alive.

Rick and I had a spirited chat and reminisced about the good times playing music. Besides music, Rick was an entertainment photographer for the Tampa Times in Florida, back in the 1970's. He has amassed over one thousand photos of onstage celebrities, such as Elvis, Elton John, Johnny & June Carter Cash, Janis Joplin, and many more. His mainly black and white 'live' performance collection of pictures were featured at the Shelburne Museum in Vermont.

I was surprised when Rick gave me a Ramblers T shirt, and a Press Pass documenting his large photo collection of music stars. The real treat came when Rick gave me a Johnny Horton Award plaque for his song, North To Alaska. Needless to say, I was honoured and surprised. Johnny Horton was one of my favourites, with hits like, Battle of New Orleans, Sink the Bismarck, & North to Alaska. Not unlike my Dad,

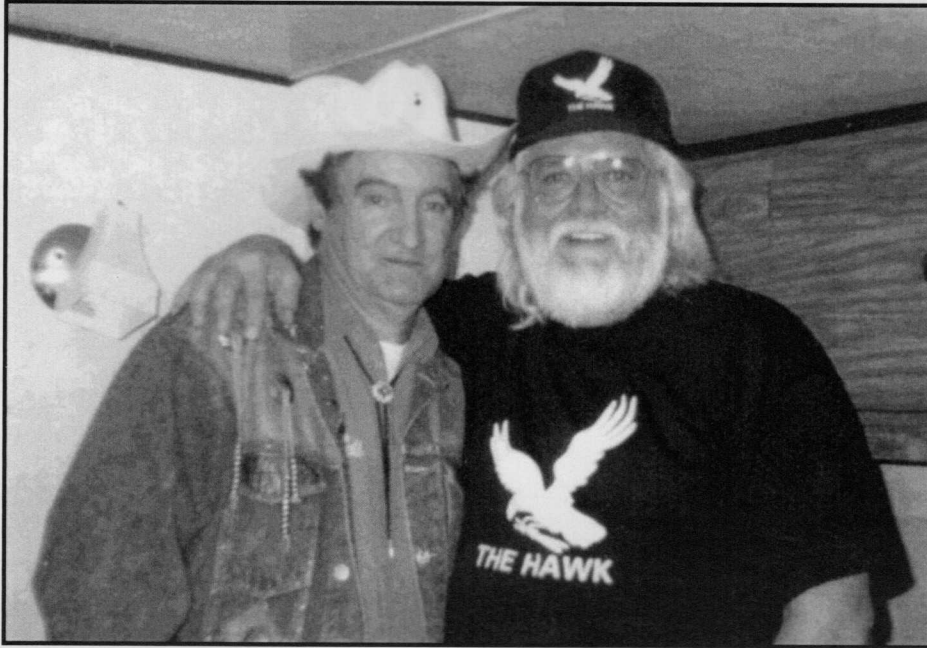
Rick has acquired several pieces of country music nostalgic history over the years.

Here's what Rick told me, when he surprised me with this treasured memory. "Grant, you asked me to tell you the story of that Johnny Horton award from Columbia Records, celebrating his sale of 250,000 North to Alaska records. Here's what I know and how I came to own it. Johnny Horton's widow, Billie Jean (who was also Hank William's widow. after his first wife, Audrey), at one point she opened a museum in Many, Louisiana. About 15 years ago, I noticed a listing on eBay about some Johnny Horton gold records and awards for sale. So I contacted the guy and he told me that Billie Jean's museum had close over 10 years ago, and they were disposing some of the display items. I bought several gold records and four guitar quarter million sales awards. Sure hope you enjoy looking at that relic of country music from the late 60's. Glad to hear you dad was acquainted with Johnny Horton."

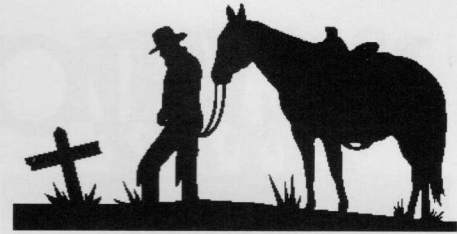
Rick and I have been friends for a few decades now since first meeting at a musician's AFM conference in Lowell, Mass. I was happy to hear he's got 6 new tunes for a cd and invited me to help pen a song or two for the next Ramblers cd. It was really special connecting with Rick again. He's an excellent promoter, just as my Dad was in his day, and 'old school' in many ways. Rick is gradually doing some solo gigs, including book signings and storytelling. Rick's excellent band 'The Ramblers' will soon be hitting the pavement for more shows very soon.

After four years, Rick & I had a lot of catching up to do. It was sad to hear that Rick had to let go of his old friend (after 22 years), and famed Flxible early 50's tour bus, 'The Mighty Pickle'. Just before COVID hit, Rick sold the bus to country music star, Marty Stuart who invested well over \$150 grand, likely, to refurbish the Pickle and re-name it 'The Chief'. A 3 foot pickle still remains over the baggage compartment as a tribute to 'The Pickle'. The plan was for Rick and The Ramblers to ride on the bus with Marty and his band, in a Main Street parade in Philadelphia, Mississippi, where Marty was from. From there, they would proceed to Marty's new Congress of Country Music, a museum of the largest private collection of country music artifacts in the world. Marty also invited Rick and the band to appear for a concert onstage with Marty and the Fabulous Superlatives, to top off the celebration. Marty has even taken The Chief to the Ryman in Nashville. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic hit, and the celebration was put on hold.

I could go on about Rick's colourful career in the music business, but I'll leave that for another time. Rick will always be a true Vermont friend, and I hope to visit again very soon. Check out Rick and the Ramblers website for future gigs, stories, cd's, and Steven Russell Payne's book about Rick, 'Riding My Guitar'. at: rickandtheallstarramblers.com



Michael T. Wall meets up with rock & roll legend, "Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins, at the Havelock Country Jamboree, 1996. American/Canadian, rock & roll legend, Ronnie Hawkins, died May 29, 2022.



IN MEMORIUM

David Hedley, passed away at age 80, on June 17/2022, in Goderich. Survived by wife, Gloria, stepson Terry, Les & Michael, & adopted son, Andy. Also survived by, his loving sister, Margie Kirkorian, sister in law Margaret, & brother in law Goldie. Predeceased by his parents & first wife, Fern Netherlands, brother Albert, & sister Jackie. A university grad & pilot, David also operated Hadley's Trout Farm near Belgrade. David was also on the Barn Dance Historical Society Board for a time. He will be missed by family & friends.

Ronald Coulthard, of St. Mary's, passed away at age 90, April 12/2022. Survived by wife, Ann, daughter Cora Lee Foster (Dale), & two grandsons, Darwin (Jenna), & Alex. Predeceased by both parents.

Ron played music at an early age with his parents. Ron played with Clarence Petrie & the Night-hawks, the Country Cousins, and the Wildwoods. He was part of the weekly, CKNX Wingham TV show, Circle 8 Ranch. Ron appreciated his family and liked travelling. Ron served as Sect. Treasurer for AFM local 418 & with the Barn Dance Historical Society. Ron will be missed by family & friends.

BARN DANCE JOURNAL

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If you are interested in more information about booking the Barn Dance Musical Production, please write to:

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P.O. Box 68,

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or call 519-530-8000

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ter@thebardance.ca



The Barn Dance Historical Society board of directors around 2016. Front row 2nd from right, Ron Coulthard served on the board as Secretary/Treasurer.

Please check
thebardance.ca
for Barn Dance Shows
& possible cancellations.

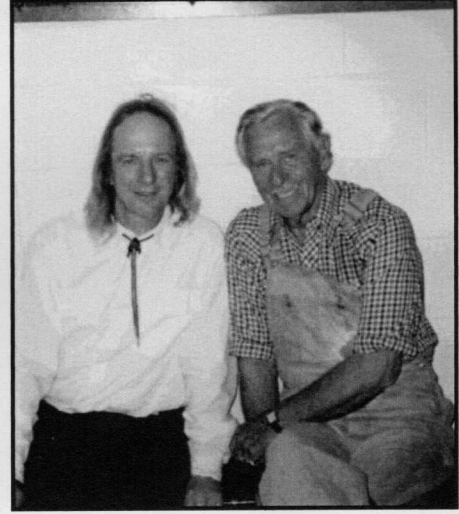
MUSIC & MEMORIES



Barn Dance host emcee, Jim Swan, doing the Barn Dance countdown.



Stompin' Tom Connors with his wife, Lena Connors, seen here with good friend Lynn Russwurm.



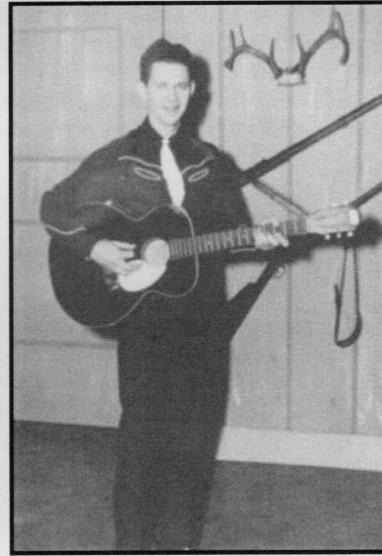
Barn Dance drummer/singer, Grant Heywood, with 2nd cousin, Gordie Tapp, of Hee Haw fame, taking a break before the Barn Dance show at the Blyth Campout Jamboree.



Onstage at a Barn Dance show. L to R - Al Alderson, bass gtr., a young Dan Mighton, fiddle, John Mighton, piano, & a young Ian Lieth, fiddle.



Earl & Martha Heywood practicing a 'Gay Ninetees' act for a show back in the 1960's.



An early picture of Larry Mercey on a set at the CKNX TV studio in Wingham.



Country Calendar

by Doreen Brown
(Toronto and
surrounding area)

Country Calendar updates
have been postponed. May
everyone stay healthy!

Country Cheers,
Doreen Brown



*Doreen Brown receives Hall
of Fame Award from the late
President Bob Everhart of
the Traditional Country
Music Association in Anita
Iowa, USA.*



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*Front row/left, Ron Coulthard was Secretary Treasurer for
the AFM musicians union, Local 418, Stratford, longer than
anyone in that position.*

NEWS & NOTES

by Grant Heywood

♪ Kevin Westphal, aka. 'The Canuck', has been shooting remote, live video shows at Dwayne King's **Guitar Corner**, on Victoria and Park St. In Kitchener. It usually includes "shop talk", special performances by guest musicians and singer/songwriters. Even the legendary, 'Tom Snarey', one of Canada's foremost drummers has been on. Catch it on YouTube

♪ 'The Canuck' will soon be releasing his next single recording/video about 'The 401.' It could be a hit like the 'Gas Song' was.

♪ Canadian Country artist, Wolfe Milestone, was nominated as a finalist in the World Songwriting Award, for his song 'Where My Truck Stops'.

♪ Newfoundland's legendary Michael T. Wall, is heading to Nashville in July, to record a new up and coming cd.



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BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

It was in the 2021 fall edition of the *The Barn Dance Opera Journal* when I first called attention to country music blog *Country Universe*.

For some time now, the site has been sequentially re-visiting each and every number one single from the nineties as reported by both the Billboard and Radio & Records charts.

The feature has provided a fascinating review of the different movements and sounds within nineties country. It has given the lie to the notion that music history unfolds in clean and discrete blocks of time. Historians love to deal in decades, but the actual musical legacy is fuzzier and less precise.

The early nineties charts were dominated by artists who first came on the Nashville scene in what is commonly known as the Class of '89. That year saw debut albums released by soon-to-be country legends such as Garth Brooks, Alan Jackson, Clint Black, Mary Chapin Carpenter, and Travis Tritt.

In many ways, this generation of country stars is the contemporary country music equivalent of the Bristol Session in 1927 that birthed the rise of commercial country music with historic

recordings made by Jimmie Rodgers and The Carter Family.

These new country stars dominated the charts and took country music places it had never been before, for better or for worse.

A fascinating take away from the feature is the enduring popularity of two lesser known artists from the nineties: Clay Walker and Tracy Lawrence.

Walker took his debut single "What's It to You" to Number One in 1993. His first four albums reached platinum status. Walker is a native of Beaumont, Texas along with his peers Mark Chesnutt and Tracy Byrd. Walker's critics at the time dismissed him as a George Strait clone, just another hunk in a hat. His music, however, has aged surprisingly well and the Texas barroom appeal of it stands out today as distinctly country and energetic.

The second artist to emerge from the feature as an unsung contemporary country music icon is Tracy Lawrence.

Lawrence debuted on Atlantic records in 1991 with the album *Sticks and Stones*. At the time, just as Walker was dismissed as a George Strait clone, Tracy Lawrence was often positioned as a poor-man's Alan Jackson if

for no other reason than they both had long hair and mustaches.

What the *Country Universe* retrospective has demonstrated is that Lawrence was one of the most versatile and capable stylists of his generation. He could effortlessly move between everything from western swing to pop country to tender ballads to honky tonk. He brilliantly bridged modern and traditional sounds in country music. His 1996 hit "Time Marches On" is a classic. It should come as no surprise Lawrence cites Merle Haggard, Keith Whitley, and George Strait as his biggest musical influences.

I can't do justice to either artist's legacy in the limited space this column. You owe it to yourself to check out their music on-line and see why they have been so positively celebrated and remembered.

I mentioned them because time marching on always offers a perspective that was missed in the moment.

THE BARN DANCE MUSEUM

The Barn Dance Museum at 273 Josephine St. Wingham, is **temporarily closed** until further notice. Sorry for the inconvenience.