



THE *final* BARN DANCE OPERA JOURNAL

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Barn Dance Website: www.thebardance.ca

THE SHOW MUST GO ON...

As it should by Grant Heywood



The very first live CKNX Barn Dance. CKNX owner/announcer, W T "Doc Cruickshank" (right), is about to introduce the band.

It's been a long journey, but it sure has been fun. I officially became editor for the Barn Dance Opera Journal, in 1999. It was conceived by my Dad, Earl Heywood, in 1991, who was editor for a short time, followed by Barn Dance musician, Ron Coulthard, and then Barn Dance musician/historian, Lynn Russwurm. The Barn Dance originated in 1937 when W. T. 'Doc' Cruickshank needed entertainment for his radio station in Wingham, Ontario. The Barn Dance radio show was born at CKNX radio 920, located on the Main Street of Wingham, and included local talent, eventually attracting top notch talented singers and musicians in the country music vein.

It wasn't until 1949 or 1950 when

The Barn Dance Radio Show hit the road as Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance. Every Saturday night the Barn Dance would be broadcast over the airwaves from a venue location somewhere in south and western Ontario. It was a huge entertainment phenomena that lasted until approx. 1962. So the early Barn Dance Show actually ran from 1937 - 1962. That's 25 years. The newly resurrected Barn Dance shows began around 1995 at the Wingham Legion as fundraisers for the Barn Dance Museum, and eventually branched into larger shows at local arenas. M.C. host of the Barn Dance shows, Jim Swan, always makes a point of announcing that the current Barn Dance has now spanned

28 years, which is 3 years longer than the original Barn Dance.

Today's Barn Dance, & Barn Dance Historical Society, was a concept of Earl & Martha Heywood. The idea was to raise money, to invest in a Barn Dance Museum in Wingham, to honour the memory of the musicians & entertainers, and showcase the 'heyday' of CKNX radio and Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance. The early years of the Barn Dance attracted country music luminaries such as Gordon Lightfoot, Tommy Hunter, Wilma Lee & Stoney Cooper, bluegrass godfather Bill Munro, Doc & Chickie Williams, Gordie Tapp, and local Barn Dance stars like Ernie King and Earl & Martha Heywood. Today's

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The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood

We all know with the passage of time, comes change. I have been the editor for the Barn Dance Opera Journal for almost 20 years now. I attended Conestoga College in the mid 1970's for one year. I enrolled in the journalism program and likely would have pursued journalism as a career if I'd have completed two more years. But my real goal was to become a musician in a working band, and so I became a full time musician on the road.

When I joined the Barn Dance Historical Society in the late 90's, I became a board member, with my Dad, Earl Heywood, who was the honorary President. Dad had started a small four page Barn Dance Journal to mainly get people to become members of the Barn Dance Historical Society. Eventually, musician/board member Lynn Russwurm took on the job as editor of the Barn Dance Opera Journal. Lynn was a living encyclopedia of early country music. His knowledge and stories of country music singers, and musicians, spanned decades and provided Barn Dance Journal readers with memorabilia and facts that many readers could relate to.

It was Barn Dance Society member, Wayne Otterbein, who prodded me into taking Lynn Russwurm's position as editor of the Barn Dance Journal. Lynn wanted to step aside and spend more time playing music and recording his songs. It has been a challenge and an honour to bring country music stories, nostalgia, and pictures from the past, as well as biographies

of well known local country entertainers. Along with staff writer Peter Saros, and events columnist, Doreen Brown, we have always tried our best to be informative and interesting in our own presentation of the printed word.

I remember when Larry Delaney's Country Music News was the voice of Canadian Country music for many years. Larry was awarded a special CCMA award for his many years of promoting Canadian Country music personalities. But everything changes, and with the advent of online media, it became difficult to compete. It is with regret that the Barn Dance Opera Journal is facing the same challenges, with this being the final issue. But... we invite you to the Barn Dance website, thebardance.ca Here you will find information on upcoming Barn Dance shows, pictures of Barn Dance performers, Pioneer Award winners, and Barn Dance history and facts.

As we turn the page on the Barn Dance Opera Journal, we hope to continue with a few pics and stories on the website from time to time. We hope you will all stay connected with the Barn Dance Historical Society. Our Barn Dance Shows will continue to entertain you with great Canadian country music talent. Our Barn Dance website will always be there to inform you of upcoming shows, stories and history. The Barn Dance Opera journal may be winding down, but that just means we will be continuing online so you can still be connected to the Barn Dance Shows and information.

I would like to take this opportunity to give a BIG THANK YOU to Dani, at Powell Printing in Listowel. Dani has been instrumental in providing excellent service in providing our Bance Opera Journals on time. Powell Printing continues to provide outstanding service for all your printing

needs. Also, a shout out to Doug and Tracy Dietrich, who spend the time to mail out all the individual Barn Dance Opera Journals. I hope you will all carry on being a friend and fan of our Barn Dance Shows. Now that you know where to find us, I hope to see you at the next Barn Dance Show.

Comments? Please contact:

Grant Heywood

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or send a message on facebook.

It has been a pleasure serving Barn Dance fans, with country music news, pics, and nostalgia. Thanks to all readers & contributors. - Grant

The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

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Phone (519) 530-8000

(or leave a message)

BARN DANCE WEBSITE:

www.thebardance.ca

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2023 COMING EVENTS

Date	Event Name	Place
Sun., May 26-28, 2023	FINAL Campout Jamboree	Blyth Arena and Campgrounds, Blyth, ON
Fri. June 30, 2023	Exeter Homecoming Dance	Exeter Community Centre, Exeter, ON
Sun., Sept. 17, 2023	Barn Dance Show	Parkview Gardens Listowel, ON
Sun., Nov. 5, 2023	Barn Dance Show with George Fox	Wingham Town Hall Centre, Wingham, ON
Sun., Nov. 26, 2023	Barn Dance Show	Hensall Community Centre, Hensall, ON

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Barn Dance has featured many of Canada's top singers and musicians as well, including Larry Mercey, Marie Bottrell, Paul Weber, Walter Ostanek, George Hamilton IV, Naomi Bristow, Harold McIntyre, Randy Satchell, Gerald Davidson, Bonita Mercer, John & Geneva Heaman, Crystal Gage, and so many others. And let's not forget, some of Canada's master fiddlers we're part of the Barn Dance. Award winning fiddlers like Ward Allen, Al Cherny, Eleanor & Graham Townsend, Wayne Riehl, Mike Slauenwhite & Victor Pasowisty, just to name a few.

The Barn Dance era continues to showcase, and remind everyone that Wingham was a hub for country music celebrities, not unlike Nashville's Grand Ole Opry. When my Dad, Earl Heywood got his start on the CKNX Barn Dance, it launched his career when he became Canada's # 1 Singing Cowboy. He signed a record deal with RCA and performed on TV in Canada and the U.S. as well as sharing the stage with some of Nashville's finest. The Barn Dance was always first class, with Johnny Brent as the original M.C., and now M.C. Jim Swan, who captures the magical essence as today's host. When the Barn Dance re-started in 1995, Ron Coulthard, and even myself took a turn at being musical director. But steel guitarist Doug Dietrich, soon held down that position, and has continued as the best professional musical director anyone could ask for.

The Barn Dance Historical Society couldn't operate without a board of directors, and there have been just too many to list here. It was former President, Wayne Otterbein who was responsible for kick starting the Blyth Barn Dance Campout Jamboree. Director of the Blyth Barn Dance Campout Jamboree, Bill Simmermaker, has always been there to make sure everything goes according to plan. More recently, it's been Gord & Ruth Baxter, Treasurer & President, respectively, who have helped immeasurably in keeping the Barn Dance organization and shows running like a top.

That goes double for all of the volunteers who have helped at Barn Dance performances over the years. We salute you. Ernie King, Mary Elliott Freeman, Ron Coulthard and Betty Beer get honourable mention for all the organizing and help with the Barn Dances, especially the Gospel shows. The sound and lighting crew of Wayne Grieve and Scott Taylor are to be commended making the Barn Dance shows spectacular. And Dave Wallace from Ernie King Music has always been there for us.

The original Barn Dance ended around 1963. It was revived by local recording artist, Richard Knechtel, around the late 70's or early 80's. Richard staged several Barn Dances for a few years with Barn Dance veterans Earl & Martha Heywood, and Ernie King. The shows would showcase local talent as well, much like today. When Earl Heywood spearheaded the resurrected Barn Dance in the 90's, the show consisted of two bands. One band was made up of original Barn Dance musicians, and the second band led by Doug Dietrich and younger musicians. It lasted until time caught up with the older original band members. But the format continues much like the original Barn Dance. Feature professional singers and musicians, while giving younger up and coming talent a chance to be seen and heard on the Barn Dance stage. That will never change.

As the hard copy of the Barn Dance Opera Journal winds down, the Barn Dance website *thebardance.ca* will continue to be a source for everyone to get information on upcoming shows, history, stories, events, and pictures. It has been a pleasure to serve as editor for the Barn Dance Opera Journal, for nigh on 25 years. Your interest and support have made it happen. But just so you know, the Barn Dance will still carry on. Please check the schedule for upcoming shows, and enjoy the information and picture memories within these pages. As my Dad always said... *'the show must go on.'*

IN MEMORIAM



Past President of the Barn Dance Historical Society, Wayne Otterbein, congratulates Shirley Russwurm as the newly elected President.

Shirley Russwurm, age 86, wife of the late Lynn Russwurm. Passed away on March 29th, in Elmira. Shirley was the President of the Barn Dance Historical Society, at a time when the concept of a Barn Dance Museum finally came together in Wingham. She will be missed by family, friends, and those associated with the Barn Dance Historical Society.





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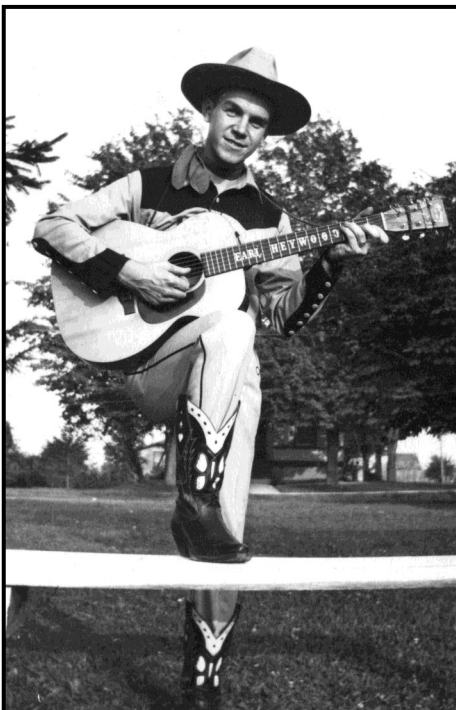
MUSIC & MEMORIES



One of the first pictures of Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance. From L to R - back row - Archie Mann, Don Robertson, Cactus Mac, Cora Robertson, Earl Heywood, Ross Mann. Front row - Bud Cruickshank, George Jordan, Pauline Swanson, Fred Templeman, and Johnny Bret.



Early picture of the CKNX Circle 8 Ranch Boys. From L to R - Back row - Don Robertson, Cora Robertson, Ross Mann, Sharon Strong, Len Love. Kneeling from L to R - Hughie Elder, and Ernie King.



Canada's Number one Singing Cowboy, Earl Heywood, dressed up for an early CKNX Barn Dance performance.



A revived Barn Dance show from the late 70's, early 80's. From L to R - Oliver Schroer on fiddle, (his brother on piano), Ernie King, Richard Knechtel, bass, and Grant Heywood, drums.



One of the first Barn Dance Historical Society's Board of Directors' Board of Directors. A lot of familiar faces. See if you can pick them out.



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MUSIC & MEMORIES



Barn Dance Journal columnist, Doreen Brown, just before her debut on the Barn Dance stage.



Larry Mercey and other guests gather for the grand finale at a Barn Dance, singing I Saw the Light.



A display of awards and pictures at the first location of the Barn Dance Museum, in the armories upstairs, in Wingham.



Grammy award winning Polka King, Walter Ostanek, always delights a Barn Dance crowd, with his great playing and award winning smile.



A display case of awards, pictures and albums, by the late Barn Dance Historical Society continues to find a favourable new location, as the current museum is shut down.



A Barn Dance reunion back in the 70's at Brussels Homecoming. Many of the old Barn Dance gang can be seen here, including, Mary Elliott, Clark Johnson, Earl and Martha Heywood, Johnny Brent, Lynn and Laura Russwurm, Don Steele, Ron Coulthard, Don Robertson, Mel Lavigne, Hughie Elder, Bill Mankiss, and many more.

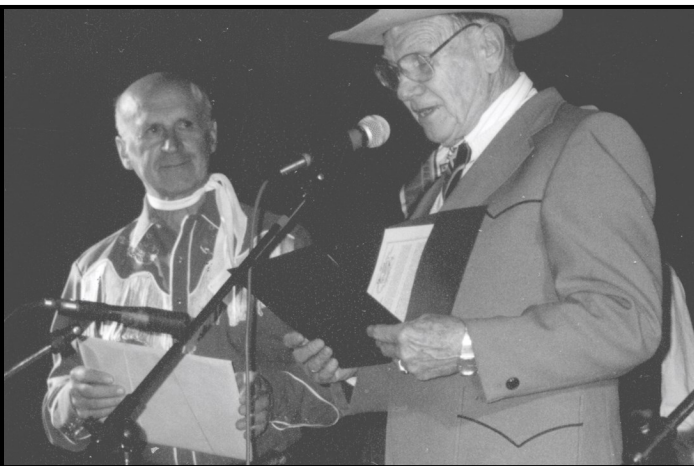
MUSIC & MEMORIES



Present and past Barn Dance M.C.'s from L to R - Jim Swan, and Johnny Brent Lynn Russwurm is on stand up bass.



Singer/Barn Dance Gospel Show director, Betty Beer gets a photo op backstage with The Singin' Newfoundlander, Michael T. Wall.



Honourary Barn Dance President, Earl Heywood, awarding Lynn Russwurm the Barn Dance Pioneer Award, onstange at a Barn Dance.



Singer/former Barn Dance Gospel Show director, Mary Elliott Freeman, receives the Barn Dance Pioneer Award from Sue Widmeyer, wife of musician, Al Widmeyer.



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

From L to R- Guitarist, George Lonsbury, Musical director/steel guitarist, Doug Dietrich, and Doug ← McNaughton, fiddle.

MUSIC & MEMORIES



Earl and Martha Heywood are always special, as guests at the Blyth Barn Dance Campout Jamboree, Lance Russwurm, in background on guitar.



St. Clements Barn Dance in 1998. Guest fiddlers Graham and Eleanor Townsend, along with Barn Dance twin fiddlers, Vic Pasowisty and Mike Slauenwhite. Lance Russwurm is off to the right playing guitar.



Pals for life. Ernie King and Hughie Elder, showing off with a Circle 8 Ranch autographed guitar, at a Barn Dance draw.

Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance

25th Anniversary



BARN DANCE JAMBOREE/CAMPOUT

You are invited to attend the
25th Anniversary

Barn Dance Jamboree/Campout Celebration!

May 26th, 27th 28th, 2023

At the Blyth Community Complex & Campground
Blyth, ON

Sponsored by the Barn Dance Historical Society
Box 68, Wingham, ON N0G 2W0

Registration & Details on website:

www.thebardance.ca or email barndance2013@gmail.com

Fri. May 26th
7PM
DANCE
Country Versatiles

Sat. May 27th
7:30PM
BARN DANCE SHOW

Featured Guests:
Larry Mercey
Naomi Bristow
Paul Weber

Sun. May 28th
10:30AM
GOSPEL SHOW

Camping Packages
and Armbands
Available at Door

BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

I was first entrusted with this column space sixteen years ago when Earl Heywood's run with *Canadian Corral* ended after his death on September 17, 2006.

In that final ride around the paddock, Grant Heywood shared having helped cover for his father in writing the column for the preceding 2-3 years as Earl wrestled with the onset of dementia related to Alzheimer's.

I remember feeling the weight of having to follow up the words of "Canada's #1 Singing Cowboy" with my re-branded *Barn Dance Corner*.

Being an outsider to The Barn Dance, I knew I couldn't drop my creative bucket into the same historical wells of shared regional experience that other *Barn Dance Opera Journal* writers like Grant Heywood and Lynn Russwurm could. My goal was always to tether the past to the present from a broader perspective, to speak and write as country music fan.

It was in that role that I recently found myself leafing through an old copy of the 1989 May/June edition of *Country Music* magazine. Ricky Van Shelton was featured on the cover which promised

other stories on the inside about Kathy Mattea, Riders in the Sky, John Anderson, Mickey Gilley, and the Bellamy Brothers.

Embedded in each issue of the magazine was the Newsletter of the Country Music Society of America, edited by Helen Barnard. "The CMSA Newsletter" feature often promoted local performers and songwriters.

My eyes flashed when I saw a contribution from Earl Heywood of Wingham, Ontario.

His story read:

I made many recording here in Canada for RCA Victor in the country field, and first recorded for them as far back as 1950...So most of my recordings are now collectibles, and I have these for sale.

For almost eleven years I was the Canadian Editor who wrote articles and A Canadian column on Canadian artists for Country Song Round-Up. Possibly there are many who still remember my columns.

During my first appearance in the U.S.A, Bill Haley's band was my back-up. This was in the Philadelphia area. Bill's band was known then as The Saddlemen. He later started Rock 'n' roll.

Coincidentally, Beryl MacDonald of Goderich, Ontario had a letter published detailing the six day trip to Fan Fair in Nashville she won while listening to her local radio station CKNX!

What were the odds that I could pull a dusty copy of a 34 year-old magazine off my shelf and find memories of Earl Heywood, Wingham, Ontario, and CKNX?

Just to round out the Canadian content, there was also a letter

from Wayne Krokback of Thunder Bay, a regional reporter for *Country Music News*, the Canadian monthly periodical published in Ottawa by Larry Delaney and Joanne Delaney.

Somehow all of these connections across time and country seemed preordained ahead of this final print-edition of *The Barn Dance Opera Journal*.

In a tip of my hat to "Canada's #1 Singing Cowboy," I can only hope that possibly there will be some who remember this column.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

BARN DANCE JOURNAL

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All prices are per issue.

E-mail - webmaster@thebardance.ca

THE BARN DANCE MUSEUM

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

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

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