



# THE BARN DANCE OPERA JOURNAL

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## RANDY OWEN, INTRIGUING RADIO PERSONALITY & MUCH MORE

by Grant Heywood

I've wanted to do an interview with famous radio personality, Randy Owen, for some time now, and finally got it together. Randy's portfolio of success in broadcasting, involvement in country music, awards presentations, interviews, to his knowledge of history and infatuation with the JFK assassination, spans many years, if not decades.

I've always admired Randy's demeanor, whether on radio, as a speaker at an event, or most recently as a host and MC at the Purple Hill Country Opry Hall along with owner, George Taylor. I asked Randy some questions about his career and he gave me enough to almost write a novel. I barely scratched the surface and was taken aback. I tried to condense, & paraphrase many answers to questions I asked, but it would likely take me a few more editions to publish everything. Here is a brief rundown of the conversation with Randy Owen. A Class Act.

**What prompted your choice to enter radio broadcasting & was there a 'Plan B'?** My career is somewhat of an accident, as I was keen on being a TV investigative reporter. The Watergate scandal made me want to expose political/corporate wrongdoers as an honourable career. In my hometown of Welland, I was involved in local TV shows, hosting, & interviewing local politicians. I received an award for top marks, at Niagara Radio College, and surprisingly, by accident, I landed a part time job at local radio station, 1470 CHOW. I wasn't an avid radio listener, and one day the

morning host stepped out, forgot about the job interview, leaving me in charge. The General manager who eventually interviewed me. (the same guy I told months earlier, that I wasn't an avid listener), had me make an audition tape, and I got the job with two more years of college to complete.

**How many radio stations have you worked at, and for how many years?**

Forty years, from 1980 to 2020. 1470 CHOW, Welland '80-'86, I started part time on wknds. 'filling in' for announcers, and accidentally got a full time job as music director. We used to run our own Top 20 countdown Sat. afternoon, recorded by our morning man, on tape. I had to play back the tape, on air. One day he forgot to tape the show. I called our program director who told me to get a copy of the Top 20 list off the desk and do the show 'live'. I listened to American Country Countdown every wknd. on a Buffalo, N.Y. station, hosted by the late, Bob Kingsley. I based my presentation of our Top 20 countdown on that show. I recorded the Top 20 as I aired it live, and still have a taped copy. The following Monday, the program director phoned me and told me to sit down. The owner heard me do the show, liked what he heard, and offered me the full time job. (Years later, Kingsley, a Facebook friend by this time, responded when I conveyed this story about his influence on me.)

96.7 CKGL-FM/570 CKGL-AM, Kitchener, '86-'95. I wanted to broaden my horizons to go from AM to FM radio because the regulations were different. Wanting to repeat my success at CHOW in a different area, I called program director, Vic Follitt, who asked for an on air tape and my credentials. I sent my resume but didn't have time to make a tape. Meanwhile, back in Welland, we had a fire at the station. A blown capacitor caused a small fire putting the station off the air for a few hours. Later, out of the blue, Vic calls me at work saying he's in town and wants to meet for lunch. He was listening and offered me the Kitchener job. Driving back to the station, we went off the air again. Another capacitor fire, and fire trucks arrived. That made my decision to move on to CKGL.

Pelmorex Radio Network. '96-'99. I did various announcing time slots there and dur-

ing the late night request show, I was on 65 different radio stations across Canada.

CKPC AM/FM, Brantford,, 2000-2007. After a short stint as a security guard (between jobs), I took the job, but I yearned to work at country music radio that played new and classic country and not just new country.

107.3 Tillsonburg, 2007-2020. The longest I'd been at any station, 13 years. Craig Fox worked there, and remembered me from Brantford. They were a family owned radio station and had just got a licence for FM country. Once again I got the job by accident, but was let go with many of the staff when Rogers took over.

**What inspired you about country music, and what are some of your favourite artists, international & local?**

I grew up listening to country music with my mom, listening to Hank Williams, Johnny Cash & Charley Pride, & all the country TV shows at that time. But I was also a huge Beatles fan. When I was at CHOW I was exposed to Alabama, Hank Jr., & Eddie Rabbit. It wasn't my mom's kind of country, but I liked it. I basically fell in love with country music because I could relate to the true life struggles, relationships, and stories it told. Although, not a musician myself, I have much appreciation and respect when a group of individuals come together and perform as a solid musical group. Amazing!

I don't have a single all time favourite country music star. Johnny Cash certainly stands out as a man who struggled through life and lived it in song. Garth Brooks became very successful and sings about his life's mistakes. Charley Pride once was the best-selling RCA artist just behind Elvis Presley, and was a down to earth common man. And Cdn.Terri Clarke, who achieved international stardom and is one of the best gr. players I've ever heard.

I've always supported local talent and early on became a fan of Cathy Chambers, who went on to become a Juno nominee. Singer/songwriter, Jamie Warren and I became good friends. His song 'Take Me Home Mississippi' song had a line, "home

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## The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood

I hope everyone survived the 3 day winter mega snowstorm this past Christmas. I'm sure we will all have stories to tell in years to come. Getting a winter's worth of cold temps. and snow in 3 or 4 days is quite unusual, and hopefully, isn't a sign of things to come with climate change looking like a formidable suspect.

We have reached a turning point with Covid rules now being relaxed, but I do believe it's prudent to err on the side of caution. Needless to say, it's comforting to be able to get out and about, and especially to gather with friends and family, or maybe catch a movie, concert, or maybe even travel. Covid has taught us all of those things we've taken for granted. As old fashioned as it may seem, hopefully we have learned what patience, respect, and civility really mean. And to identify fake and phoniness from genuine truth. We cling to tradition and are sometimes reluctant to change, but these are tumultuous and changing times we live in today.

The following are just my personal opinions from my editorial soapbox.

As we all age, we have come to realize what a different world we live in, compared to our parents and grandparents. Yes, they came through hard times as well, with two world wars, epidemics, depression etc. But what about the world outside of our civilized western society. Many people in other countries on earth, continue for years with ravaging wars, changing governments, constant famine, denial of basic human rights, pollution, poverty, imprisonment and torture. We think we are safe from what we see and hear on TV, social media etc., but the honest truth is that it is now becoming visible in our own area and daily lives. We can stick our heads in the sand and try to pretend that it only happens somewhere else, but that's just

fallacy.

It would be wonderful if we had a magic wand to make all of the world's problems disappear, but we all know that's not how it works. This Christmas, I personally reflected on the weight of all of these world issues, as overwhelming as it may seem. The widening gap between rich and poor has become a chasm and the propaganda and division of some of the world's government leaders have corrupted the truth and subverted those who are just trying to make a decent life for their families. The lust for power and billions of dollars has become the new benchmark for success, or so it seems. Selfishness, greed, and lies have replaced selflessness, indifference, generosity, and honesty, or just common decency. It almost seems that everything our grandparents and parents sacrificed for us, has even carelessly disregarded and replaced with ignorance and apathy. There are those that would have you believe that black is white, or that the world is flat. We should all speak out and have a voice but many have been tainted by unscrupulous people who pretend to be morally correct.

I hope for 2023, that we can become more tolerant, be kinder to one another, and reach out to those who may be strangers and maybe worse off than ourselves. We cannot continue to live in a glass bubble and pretend to be oblivious to what's going on. We all have a duty to try and make this a better world without involving conspiracy theories, politics, hatred, ignorance, and lies. Learn to separate fact from fiction, religion from religious cults, those in denial and reality, and the difference between love & hate. Democracy is the best we've got, as flawed as it may be. We've only got one world, we should do our best to make it better for everyone.

On a brighter note; As I get older, there have been three constants in my life, the love of family and friends, doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, and the love of performing and listening to music... all kinds of music. I have played everything from jazz to blues to folk to country and rock, bluegrass, and yes, even reggae. I really appreciate many of my friends who only like

one kind of music, mainly country, and come to hear me perform blues, rock, pop or whatever. I would do the same, even if I didn't like that particular music, out of respect for the performer. I only wish more of my friends would be more accepting. This is what makes our musical world so harmonious to different possibilities. For those who have never experienced it, try going outside of your comfort zone. You may well be surprised. My parents listened to country, bluegrass, big band, pop, and even some rock. Earl & Martha instilled in me to listen to all kinds of music as they did. I've never regretted their advice.

The New Year already has some Barn Dance Shows booked. Our final 25th Anniversary Blyth Campout Jamboree is one of the shows I'm looking forward to. There will be many friends and smiling faces when Barn Dance host, Jim Swan says..."From coast to coast, people like old time country music most". Hope to see you at the next Barn Dance.

Comments? Please contact:

Grant Heywood

5584 Deborah Glaister Line,

R. R. #2, Wellesley, Ontario

NOB 2T0

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

or send a message on Facebook.



**DAVID CARSON**  
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**5531 Perth Line 86, R.R. #3**  
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**Email: [info@davidcarson.on.ca](mailto:info@davidcarson.on.ca)**

## 2023 COMING EVENTS

Date	Event Name	Place
Sun., May 7, 2023	Barn Dance Show 2 p.m.	Purple Hill Country Hall, Thorndale
Sat., May 27, 2023	25th Annual Blyth Campout Jamboree (FINAL ONE)	Blyth Arena Complex, Blyth
Sun., May 28, 2023	Barn Dance Gospel Show	Blyth Arena Complex, Blyth
Sun., Nov. 5, 2023	Barn Dance Show plus George Fox Show	Wingham Heritage Theatre, Wingham

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ain't a place, it's a feeling," always resonated with me. I have many musician friends in Tillsonburg who attend local jams. St. Thomas singer/songwriter, Michael Warren, who did his first radio interview with me, is a very talented singer/guitarist who I have a lot of respect for. He's one of the kindest persons I've ever had the privilege to know.

**Attending many awards shows and being an award recipient yourself, what is one of your most memorable accomplishments and what was an embarrassing moment in your career?**

While working in Tillsonburg, I played a song, 'Be True To You', by London singer Shelly Rustin. Later on, Shelly told me the story behind the song. Listening to the song while playing it, was a teenage woman who was about to kill herself. She heard me play the song and it stopped her from committing suicide. She turned her life around just from a song I had played on the radio. It was hard to comprehend the impact of that moment. (Just one of Randy's striking moments)

One of a few embarrassing moments happened in Welland. Marie Bottrell was playing at a local country bar. I offered to meet Marie for dinner on Sat. between the matinee and her evening show. We each brought a friend, and at the time I was driving my first car, a beat up, Datsun. Me and my friend pulled up to the front of the restaurant, and saw Marie walking up the sidewalk toward us. As my friend got out of my car, the passenger door fell off and landed on the sidewalk! Embarrassing then, but funny now.

**How did your fascination with the JFK assassination come about?**

On a Sunday afternoon, at home, I watched a movie on TV, PT 109, about JFK being a WW II hero. Weeks later our Grade 6 teacher had us write an essay about a hero. All my hockey heroes got picked so I picked JFK. A classmate had me come over to his house to see his dad's JFK scrapbook about the assassination. I was enthralled! Later on, while continuing my research, I had identified one of the frames from the famous JFK Zapruder film. I realized it had been tampered with, along with the text. After uncovering this evidence, I was hooked, and still believe there was a coverup.

I've become internationally known as a JFK assassination researcher. I met, and talked, with Lee Harvey Oswald's widow, Marina, while speaking at a symposium at Laurentian University. I've talked with assassination eyewitnesses, written published articles, and was an MC for three years at an annual symposium in Dallas Texas. My website was listed by a Washington Post reporter, as one of the three best on the subject. I have collected photos, film, data and research to the point of correcting locations of photographers on the subject a few times.

I don't believe conspiracy theories, and question if it will ever be solved. But some-

times the journey is more interesting than the destination. I've met movie director Oliver Stone, to witnesses and authors, like Norman Mailer, and it's been a fascinating journey.

**You've met many celebrities. Who are a few of them that impressed you.**

I've interviewed Cdn. artists such as the late Terry Carrise (my first interview). I became lifelong friends with the late Terry Sumsion, and after being diagnosed with cancer, he asked me to write his obituary. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done. Marie Bottrel, one of the best vocalists ever, after hearing her sing for the first time in person. A very good friend with a crazy sense of humour. Carroll Baker, performs and sings like no one else. She invited me onstage once, to help sing Why Me Lord. I cherish that moment and her friendship which has lasted since we first met in the early 80's.

George Jones, likely the best country singer ever. His wife Nancy called asking if I wanted to interview him by phone, before his performance at Lulu's Roadhouse. I was also the MC at the concert. I knew it was his 60th birthday and asked Nancy for permission to bring a cake backstage for him, which I ended up presenting onstage. Weeks later I received a very nice thank you letter from George. It blew me away!

I met and interviewed Waylon Jennings several times. His history with Buddy Holly, 'outlaw' music with Willie, Kris, and Johnny, always impressed me. When he started calling me "Hoss", it was like an acknowledgement of our friendship.

I'll always remember the first time I met the legendary, Johnny Cash, backstage at Kitchener's Centre in the Square. I felt intimidated interviewing one of the biggest country stars ever. After the interview, his road manager, who sat next to Johnny, said to me, "That was great! You guys talked about things even I didn't know!"

I had a private meeting with Garth Brooks and his wife, Trisha Yearwood, for ten minutes, the last time he played in Hamilton. After the interview he came over and gave me a big 'bro hug'.

That was special.

**You have witnessed country music go through many changes. Do you have any likes, or dislikes, about country music and the industry?**

My biggest dislike is how disposable the music, the artists, and the personalities have become. Long term planning and grooming of an artist for a long career has faded. I dislike how the industry treats it's legends. Once Johnny Cash, Anne Murray, and the Tommy Hunter show were dropped, nobody was safe, regardless of your status.

I dislike how narrowly focused radio has become concentrating solely on 'today's country' format. I enjoyed playing new and classic country on Tillsonburg radio. The leading country station in London has 12% of the listening audience, and they're one of



the top stations in that market. I had an audience share of 26% in Tillsonburg. The format may not work in most other markets, but it sure worked in ours.

I'm not happy how large companies have destroyed local radio. Many of the smaller stations they own have replaced live, local announcers with an out of town announcer. While hosting a live show they record voice tracks sent over the Internet to smaller stations to mimic a live local announcer. Announcers & newscasters lose credibility, mispronouncing local names & places. It waters down broadcaster's integrity and leaves no room to gain experience let alone even know anything about what they play or discuss. I built my career on educating myself about country music artists.

And don't get me started on local news & sports. That's all gone from stations owned by major corporations. Local police reports, elections, news, is quite often missing on local radio. The CRTC has done nothing about this. Local artists used to be able to get radio airplay to boost their careers. Sadly, that opportunity has vanished.

Interviewing artists at length has now been shortened to 5 or 10 minutes. I remember having Brett Kissel and Terri Clark live on air for over an hour, because I knew they could keep the listener interested. The long interviews produced some amazing live performances which, sadly, is all but gone. Programmers think people's attention span only requires quick sound bites, and are afraid they'll change the channel. I still get recognized by people on the street, even those who weren't country music fans, have said they really enjoyed those interviews.

Two important things in college and radio have been totally ignored. According to radio ratings surveys, listeners complained that announcers talked too much. So what happened? Morning shows added co-hosts,

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some with more than two announcers, adding more talk! Listeners also said that announcers didn't say who the artist was they just heard. Such backward thinking on today's conglomerate radio.

I am proud that the industry has recognized more Canadian recording artists. Once upon a time, our major Cdn. artists were few, like Anne Murray, Gordon Lightfoot, Carroll Baker, etc. But today, there are more & more Cdn. country artists with world class recordings, headlining and selling out large venues, receiving gold and platinum recording status that was almost unheard of 40 years ago. And in my opinion, the Cdn. Country music industry is more diverse than the American industry.

**What else is there about Randy Owen we don't know, eg. likes, hobbies, regrets, bucket list?**

I love discovering things I didn't know from country artist interviews, I also love reading something that makes me think and compels me to learn. I'm a huge Star Trek and Beatles fan. Regrets... I wish I had the opportunity to support, and do more, for people who make up the Canadian. country music industry. I'd love to write a book on my career, or the JFK assassination, but I don't have the time or discipline to create works I'd be proud of.

I sometimes regret not having a family of my own. On my pay, as a radio personality that wouldn't work. I could've moved up the ladder in the business, but I was happy doing what I loved. My parents, some relatives and friends, and many in the business, went through divorce, most times being nasty. It dissuaded me from having a family, although I did come close a few times. I likely wouldn't have done what I've accomplished in my career being tied down.

I have done things, been awarded, and rewarded, met and talked with celebrities, and enjoyed my career's journey since winning the national broadcasting award at the age of 29. These are things that most people only dream about, and I'm humbled to have had the chance. My bucket list is to get a bucket. LOL. I believe my radio days are behind me, although a podcast is not out of the question. I'm considering another venture involving live music, but that's in the early stages, and maybe I'll write a book. We'll see. Big on my bucket list, is winning the lottery jackpot and using the money to help some family and friends. Then I'd move to a sparsely populated tropical island in the South Pacific. I already have my island picked out.

Editor's note: I should've asked what island Randy picked out. That's my dream too.



# MUSIC ARTISTS WE LOST IN 2022

by Grant Heywood

It is with great reverence every year, when I list the music artists that have passed away. Although this is not a complete list, it touches on most of the notable ones. I may spend a little more time on some of the Canadian artists, as some were close and meant a lot to me.

## COUNTRY, POP, & ROCK ARTISTS:

♫ **Alan White**, age 72. Drummer for prog. Rock band Yes, and countless others.

♫ **Bobby Ryder**, age 79. Early 60's teen idol. Song hits: Wild One, Volare, and others.

♫ **C.W. McCall**, age 93. Hit song, Convoy, also redone by Cdn. Jason McCoy.

♫ **Christine McVie**, age 79. Singer/songwriter and keyboardist for Fleetwood Mac. Strangely enough, Canadian singer/songwriter, Shirley Eikhard, had a hit with Christine McVie's Fleetwood Mac song, Say You Love Me. Christine was originally from England. She also wrote hits like Don't Stop, Little Lies, and many other songs for Fleetwood Mac. She was inducted into the R and R Hall of Fame with Fleetwood Mac, and has garnered numerous other awards.

♫ **Irene Cara**, age 63. Singer of the 80's hit song Flashdance (also a movie)

♫ **Jerry Allison**, age 82. Buddy Holly's original drummer and co-writer of hit songs, Peggy Sue, and That'll Be The Day.

♫ **Jerry Lee Lewis**, 'The Killer', age 87. Singer/songwriter/pianist. Known as the first 'wildman' of early rock and roll. Hits include, Great Balls of Fire, Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On and others, plus he also had hits in country music as well. An icon of early rock and roll, he is a multiple award winner.

♫ **Loretta Lynn**, age 90. Known as the Queen of Country Music, she had many hits including You Ain't Woman Enough, Don't Come Home A Drinkin', and Coal Miner's Daughter, which was made into a movie about her life. A multiple award winner, Loretta was also an 'early on' advocate for women's rights.

♫ **Luke Bell**, age 32. A young country singer who wrestled with mental challenges. Hit song, Don't Mind If I Do.

♫ **Meatloaf**, age 74. Rock singer/songwriter, best known for the hit song/album, Bat Out of Hell.

♫ **Naomi Judd**, age 76. One half of the hit country music duo The Judds, with her daughter Wynonna. Many awards and hit songs including, Momma He's Crazy, and Grandpa. They amassed 19 #1 hits. Naomi was a strong woman who dealt with mental challenges throughout her career.

♫ **Nolan Neal**, age 41. Contestant on America's Got Talent & The Voice. An acoustic folk/country artist. Hits include, Lost, and Send Me A Butterfly.

♫ **Olivia Newton John**, age 73. An Australian pop singer/actress/activist, Olivia was a multi-award winner during her career. She starred in the movie Grease and sold 100 million records worldwide. Hits include, I Honestly Love You, Hopelessly Devoted To You, Physical, and many more. She even had some cross-over country hits. She advocated advanced research for breast cancer and was an environmentalist and animal rights activist.

♫ **Ronnie Spector**, age 78. Singer with the popular girl group, The Ronettes, with hits like, Be My Baby, Walking In The Rain, and Baby I Love You. Ronnie had a bizarre, tumultuous and abusive marriage for 6 yrs., to the Ronette's famous producer, Phil Spector.

♫ **Taylor Hawkins**, age 50. Drummer for R and R Hall of Fame band, The Foo Fighters. Taylor also toured with Canadian artists, Sass Jordan and Alanis Morissette, early in his career. Many tribute concerts, upon the death of Hawkins, took place, with top name artists around the world. He was very well respected.

## CANADIAN MUSIC ARTISTS WE LOST IN 2022:

♫ **Big Rude Jake**, age 57. Blues and 'swing punk', singer/songwriter/guitarist based in the Toronto area. Recorded several songs and toured Canada regularly.

♫ **Dallas Good**, age 48. Co-founder of the popular country/rock group, The Sadie's. Dallas is the son of Bruce Good of the famous Good Brothers Band, and his wife Margaret. Travis Good, of The Sadie's is a brother to Dallas. The Sadie's are a popular fixture in the Canadian music scene, and have surrounded themselves with the likes of Garth Hudson of The Band, as well as Neil Young.

♫ **John Till**, age 78. Legendary guitarist, John Till, co-founded the Stratford band The Revols, which included Richard Manuel (The Band), and Ken Kalmusky (Ian and Sylvia's Great Speckled Bird), who were also from Stratford. He later went on to join Janis Joplin's Full Tilt Boogie Band, touring across Canada on the Festival Express with Janis, The Burrito Bros., Grateful Dead, Ian and Sylvia, Buddy Guy, Mountain, and Delaney and Bonnie and Friends. John also played guitar on Janis Joplin's last award winning album, Pearl. John was a personal friend, as well as a board member with Local 418 Stratford Musicians Assoc. John Till and Ken Kal-

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# MUSIC ARTISTS WE LOST IN 2022 CONTINUED

by Grant Heywood

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musky both have stars on the Stratford Walk of Fame.

♪ **Rompin' Ronnie Hawkins**, age 87. Originally from Arkansas, Ronnie (singer/songwriter), and drummer Levon Helm moved to Canada and started playing the club circuit forming a band, The Hawks, that included, local Stratford, Simcoe, London, musicians, Robbie Robertson, Richard Manuel, Rick Danko, and transplanted Levon Helm from Arkansas. Later on, Ronnie hired another guitar slinger from Stratford, Brian Pawley, from the Plum Loco band. Ronnie's career spans over 50 some years charting hits like, Mary Lou, Forty Days, Who Do You Love, and others. Ronnie was a rebel rouser that had a tight knit band playing clubs and juke joints all over Canada. But Ronnie loved Toronto. He called Yonge Street back in the 1960's the 'Promised Land', where bars were full on the Yonge Street strip. Ronnie and the Hawks frequented plans like The Hawks Nest, The Colonial, Friar's Tavern and Le Coq d'Or Tavern where they were regulars. In the 70's Ronnie eventually moved to the Peterborough/Lake Simcoe area where he hosted John and Yoko Lennon when they staged their Live Peace concert in Toronto. He also appeared with The Band in the Martin Scorsese movie, The Last Waltz. Ronnie won a Juno award as best country vocalist in 1984, and is recognized in Canada's Walk of Fame. I met Ronnie a few times after gigs and on the road. He was one of a kind.

♪ **Shane Yellowbird**, age 42. Shane was an indigenous (Cree heritage) country singer/songwriter from Alberta, best known for his 2006 Canadian Country Top 10 hit, Pickup Truck. He was a Juno nominee and recipient of the Aboriginal Entertainer of the Year Award. He recorded and toured Canada throughout his career. Unfortunately, Shane died from issues with epilepsy.

♪ **Susan Jacks**, age 73. Susan will always be known for her hit song with the Poppy Family, Which Way You Goin' Billy. The song generated 4 million in sales worldwide. Living in British Columbia during her early singing days, she asked a young Terry Jacks to accompany her on guitar at a performance. They eventually married and started the Poppy Family band. She also had other hits including her and Terry Jacks on the hit song, Where Evil Grows. They continued to record and garner Juno nominations. In the 80's, Susan remarried and moved to Nashville and became a staff songwriter at a publishing firm, recording and releasing several country singles. She was nominated for a Grammy for a song on an album, Snuggle Up, and co-wrote and sang Lookin' For Love, for the

movie The Last Chance Cafe. Susan died from ongoing kidney complications.

♪ **Shirley Eikhard**, age 67. Born in Sackville, N.B., she was a singer/songwriter who wrote the big hit, Something To Talk About for Bonnie Raitt, and at 15, Shirley's song, It Takes Time, became a hit for Anne Murray. Later in her career, Cher, Alanna Myles, Emmylou Harris, Quartette, and Rita Coolidge recorded songs by Shirley Eikhard. Her first album, titled Shirley Eikhard, won her a couple of Juno awards for best country female artist in '73 and '74. She has gone on to write many other songs and recorded several solo albums, appearing on TV and playing at major events. But touring wasn't something she particularly enjoyed. In the 1990's Shirley recorded a couple of jazz albums, and headlined her own concert special for Bravo. Her last album, Anything Is Possible, in 2021 was about her diagnosis with cancer. Her partner Lola Osborne died in 2021. Shirley resided in Harrison, Ont. and died at the Orangetown Hospital from cancer. Shirley was inducted into Canada's Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2020, for her song, Something to Talk About. Her mother, June Eikhard, was a fiddle player, who was a friend of Earl and Martha Heywood and would visit on chance meetings.

This In Memoriam includes a couple of close musical friends that many of us know locally.

♪ **Jim Dixon**, 1952-1922. Born in Listowel. Lived in Woodstock, Ont. Husband to Cindy Dixon (35 yrs.)

I played my first gig with Jim and Cindy Dixon, (along with Doug Dietrich) many years ago at a community hall up on the Bruce Peninsula. We have been good friends ever since. I always enjoyed Jim and Cindy's company, kindness, and song selection. Jim and Cindy were fun to be around, always enjoyed the moment, and were an inseparable team. They performed often, playing country music at many local venues and events.

Jim and Cindy were special. They even came out to hear me play classic rock with the Crackerjack Palace band. I always had fun playing with them for Sidewalk Days in Woodstock and I was honoured to be asked to play drums on their latest cd release. Jim & Cindy also had a 2nd family in Texas, where they wintered and played music.

A celebration of Jim's life, hosted by Randy Owen, took place last Oct. at the Legion in Tillsonburg, and was very well attended. Many people appreciated Jim, and he won't be forgotten. Condolences to Cindy, family and friends, and musicians who performed with Jim and Cindy.

♪ **Bill Murray**, 1940-2022. From Stratford, Ont. Husband to Carol Murray (35 yrs.)

I was proud to be in Bill's country band, The Moonlighters, on many occasions. I've known Bill for several years, and always enjoyed his singing voice and sense of humour. We had more than our share of laughs and good times, on and offstage.

Bill was the kind of guy that was never afraid to tackle a new tune, and always gave his musicians the spotlight as well. He was a fixture for years, with The Moonlighters, on the Stratford area country music scene. Bill could read a crowd and almost always injected some 50's and 60's style rock into his performance. His rendering of George Jones songs was one of Bill's special talents.

Getting together at Danny and Linda Murray's intimate song circle at their house or even at Bill and Carol's at Christmas, was always a treat. Bill was a family man but was very much active in local sports, coaching, and supporting local hockey and baseball. It was heartwarming to see 350 or more people at the Army Navy club in Stratford, for Bill's Celebration of Life, just before New Years. The musicians, friends, and family that were there, undoubtedly felt Bill's presence as the musicians played many favourite songs. Bill will certainly be missed by so many. Condolences to Carol, family friends, and band members.

♪ **Harvey A. Mann**, - 1949-2022, Midland, Ontario.

Husband of Cathy (Puddicombe), father of Steve, brother of Connie (Taws). Predeceased by his parents, Ross and Lola Mann.

Harvey was an avid baseball pitcher, with a 'no hitter' streak. A talented musician, Harvey used to sing with his sister Connie, but also performed with his dad, fiddler Ross Mann, along with the CKNX Ranch Boys. I remember, as a kid, 'hanging out' with Harvey, occasionally backstage at a Barn Dance. He also played with Georgian Country, and Overtime, as well as a karaoke host and dj.

Harvey was a gentle giant, and loved his family dearly. He always had a big smile, just like his dad. He will be greatly missed by family and friends.

## THE BARN DANCE MUSEUM

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



# MUSIC & MEMORIES



*The Hummingbirds left to right; Arsene Briere, Lynn and Laura Russwurm, and Earl Heywood.*



*Early Ranch Boys picture, left to right; George Jordan, Earl Heywood, Bill Simms, Ross Mann, Don Robertson, and Archie Mann.*



*R.P.M. Magazine founder, Walt Grealis with Earl Heywood at the Royal York Hotel, R.P.M. Awards.*



*Early barn Dance pioneers left to right; Fiddlers, Al Cheney and Lucky Ambeault.*



*Barn Dance M.C., Jim Swan backstage with Tommy Hunter. Photo by Michael T. Wall.*



## Country Calendar

Members have asked about Doreen's contribution to the Barn Dance Opera Journal. Due to on-going health issues, Doreen is unable to continue her column. We sincerely appreciate her many years as a Barn Dance contributor. We will truly miss her information on upcoming country music shows.

*Thank you Doreen.*



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### BARN DANCE GENERAL MEETING

APRIL 4, 2023 AT 1:30 PM

WINGHAM KNIGHTS OF  
COLUMBUS, WINGHAM, ON

## REMEMBERING IAN TYSON

Ian Tyson, age 89. Undoubtedly, one of Canada's greatest Country, Folk, Western, Americana singer/songwriters, died at his ranch in Longview, Alberta, from several health issues.

Ian Tyson said that he was inspired by Wilf Carter in his early years. Originally from B.C. Ian moved to Alberta. He met Sylvia Fricker and started a successful folk duo, Ian & Sylvia. It was the early 1960's and they toured the world & eventually got married. They resided in Alberta, and started and fronted a group, The Great Speckled Bird, which included musician, Ken Kalmusky from Stratford. They released 13 folk & country albums. Sylvia had also written a hit for the 60's group, We Five, called, You Were On My Mind.

In the 70's, Ian hosted a national TV show which included Sylvia as well as The Great Speckled Bird on occasion. Ian and Sylvia had one son and got divorced in the mid 70's. Ian enjoyed working on his horse ranch in Alberta and began writing and recording cowboy/folk music to the country music market. His Cowboyography album went

### Booking the Barn Dance

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

*Barn Dance Bookings,  
P.O. Box 68,*

*Wingham, Ont. N0G 2W0;  
or call 519-530-8000*

*E-mail:*

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



platinum, and in 1989, both Ian & Sylvia were inducted into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame. Ian's song, Four Strong Winds was chosen by CBC listeners as the greatest Canadian Song of all time. He also wrote an autobiography titled, The Long Trail: My Life In the West. Ian eventually married twice more but it never lasted.

In 2006, Ian Tyson suffered from irreversible scarring of his vocal cords, at a recent concert at the Havelock Jamboree. A short while after he contracted a virus on a flight to Denver. He continued to write and record but his vocals became "gravelly" as stated by Tyson. Ian received many accolades including the Order of Canada, Cdn. Songwriters Hall of Fame, and Mariposa Hall of Fame, with Sylvia. Many of Ian Tyson's songs were covered by other artists including Judy Collins, Neil Young, & Johnny Cash. Some of his best songs were Four Strong Winds, Someday Soon, as well as Summer Wages & Navajo Rug, which were honored as two of the Top 100 Western Songs of All Time.

# BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

In previous columns, I have touched on how important reading about country music was to my musical identity and upbringing.

In this column, I want to not only remember the trailblazing newspapers, magazines, and journals I grew up reading, but celebrate current outlets still writing and thinking about country music online in 2023.

For somebody with no cultural claim to country music, ( I grew up middle-class in suburbs of the Twin Cities in Minnesota in the 80's and 90's) reading writing about country music was hugely important to me. It was my country classroom and education.

I depended on magazines like *Country Music* to fill a non-singer and no-player like myself in on all the people, places and history so important to the country music story and tradition. The opinions of Bob Allen, Rick Kienzle, Patrick Carr, Michael Bane, and Hazel Smith were every bit as influential as the country music stars I was listening to. In fact, their writing encouraged me to dig deeper and search harder to find non-mainstream music and the older artists underpinning it all.

I was lucky enough to be coming of age in the 90's when country music experienced a massive resurgence in popularity. I devoured magazines riding that wave of relevance like *New Country* which had its finger firmly on Nashville's pulse. *Country Weekly* could be found racked at any

grocery checkout lane. Even alternative country music had a voice in Grant Alden's and Peter Blackstock's *No Depression*.

It was always easy to find something written about country music.

As further proof of that, The Country Music Foundation still published *The Journal of Country Music*. *Twang*, a short-lived lifestyle/music magazine, was published in the 90's. Here in Canada, Larry and Joanna Delaney published *Country Music News* out of Ottawa for 32 years.

It was special because it was committed to specifically serving Canadian country music artists and their fans.

Heck, I remember first learning about the Barn Dance in detail by reading an issue of *The Barn Dance Opera Journal*.

Then came the internet. How we listened to music changed just as radically as how we read about it. Thankfully, the circle of country music journalism remains unbroken today online.

I personally enjoy following Zackary Kephart's *The Musical Divide*. For years now, I have regularly checked in with Matt Bjorke's *Roughstock* and Jeffery B. Remz's *Country Standard Time*.

I recently discovered *Front Porch* whose mission is to connect audiences with Canadian country artists. Grady Smith is a YouTuber well worth watching for his insights and take on country music. Ken Morton

Jr.'s *That Nashville Sound* is a great place to see that latest country music videos.

*Holler* is an excellent on-line country music magazine.

I am on the masthead at *Country Universe* and contribute and comment as often as I can.

The take home message from all of this is that online content still connects country generations as strongly as the storied publications of the past.

The show must go on...

## The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

P.O. Box 68

Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0

Phone (519) 530-8000

(or leave a message)

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