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 Brenda Burks 903-784-8859
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The Central Texas Bluegrass Association
P.O. Box 9816
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Central Texas BLUEGRASS



Bulletin

VOLUME 25
 NUMBER 4
 APRIL 2003

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FREDERICKSBURG

The March show was a great success. Despite some initial drizzle, about 350 folks showed up and enjoyed the show. The next show is May 17. Look for more info in next months Bulletin.

Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) budget cuts have wiped out artist support grants for this years Fredericksburg shows. This results in a \$300-\$500 loss for each show, or a total reduction of \$1500-\$2500.

Please help the CTBA & Gillespie County Historical Assoc. find sponsors to make up this difference. Any contacts you could make or suggestions of businesses that might be interested would help keep this series going.

HOUSE CONCERT

Peter McLaughlin and Chris Brashear perform at the home of Tom & Elizabeth Pittman on May 17, 2003. Look for more info in next month's Bulletin.

For further info/reservations:
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THIS ISSUE

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For information on CTBA membership and activities, contact:
Central Texas Bluegrass Association
P. O. Box 9816
Austin, Tx, 78766-9816
512-261-9440
email:ctba@centraltexasbluegrass.org
www.centraltexasbluegrass.org

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EDITORIAL THOUGHTS

Thanks to Tom Pittman for allowing us to print his "Curtain Talk". Please support the Fredericksburg shows by coming to the show and by helping find sponsorship for this great series.

CTBA Artists and Bands BOOKING INFORMATION

- Austin Lounge Lizards: Tom Pittman
Blackland Prairie Boys: Clayton Elliott
Blazing Bows: Mary Hattersley
Brazos Country Grass: Gary Potter
Eddie Collins: 512-836-8255
Grazmatics: Mike Landschoot
Hard to Make a Living: John Hood
Ledbetters Band: Spencer Drake
Manchaca All-Stars: B. Buchanan
New Life PraiseGrass: S. Boatright
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Onion Creek Crawdaddies: Trent Shepherd
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The Spurs of the Moment: Joan Chisholm
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Max Zimmet: 512-327-6023

PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU MUST HAVE A CTBA BAND MEMBERSHIP TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS LISTING. IF YOU ALREADY ARE A CTBA MEMBER, SIMPLY SEND IN THE ADDITIONAL \$5.00 TO BECOME A CTBA BAND MEMBER.

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Table with 4 columns: Ad Type, Price, Ad Type, Price. Full Page 7"x9" \$30.00, 1/4 page 3"x4" \$12.50, 1/2 Page 7"x4" \$15.00, 1/8 page 3.5"x2" \$10.00

Take \$10.00 off above rates if you are a business member. Copy deadline is the 15th of the month. Publication on or about the 1st. Contact the editor at thegarage@swbell.net for more information.

The Central Texas Bluegrass Bulletin is published monthly by the Central Texas Bluegrass Association. Members of CTBA receive the Bulletin as a member service of the Association. Subscription rate for additional copies and for non-members is \$15.00 per year.

Publisher's Copy Protective Clause: Advertisers assume liability for all contents of advertisements and from any claims arising therefrom. We reserve the right to reject advertising for reasons of space availability or publication standards.



LOCAL SHOWS

- Apr 5: Grazmatics, Artz Rib House*
Apr 6: Blackland Prairie Boys, Artz Rib House*
Apr 11: Manchaca All-Stars, Manchaca Firehall 7:30 PM
Apr 13: Manchaca All-Stars Artz Rib House*
Apr 19: Sieker Band, Artz Rib House*
Apr 26: Tennessee Valley Authority, Artz Rib House*
Apr 26: Elizabeth Brandshaw & the Double Eagle String Band, Willa Porter & Wayfaring
Apr 27: Eddie Collins, Artz Rib House*

*Artz Rib House: 2330 S. Lamar, Austin 512-442-8283

Please email (zimmet@skin-vein.com) or call (512-485-7700) the editor to have your show(s) listed.

Guitar Tex advertisement for Mark Waldrop expert repair, 4330 McCullough San Antonio, TX 78212, 210-822-1595

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

- Apr 3-6: Oakdale Park Bluegrass Jamboree
Apr 4-5: Triple Creek RV PK Gospel Weekend
Apr 11-13: XIT Heritage Bluegrass Festival
Apr 14-19: Monroe's RV Park Camp & Jam
Apr 16-19: Plum Creek Bluegrass Festival
Apr 17-20: Old Settler's Music Festival
Apr 24-26: Triple Creek RV PK Bluegrass Weekend
Apr 24-27: Three Rivers Bluegrass Festival
May 2-3: Triple Creek RV PK Gospel Weekend
May 2-3: Salmon Lake Park Fun Weekend
May 16-18: Fire On The Strings Bluegrass Festival

Please contact venues for up to date information. Schedules change frequently.

JOIN CTBA TODAY

A one year membership includes a subscription to the Central Texas Bluegrass Bulletin. Business membership includes a business card advertisement in each issue. Band membership includes a Booking Info listing.

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BANJO WORKSHOP

A 5-String Bluegrass Banjo Workshop will be presented by Pinecastle Recording artist Ross Nickerson at Artz Ribhouse, April 13th from 1-5pm. For more information contact Angie Sumpter at angiesumpter@aol.com or call toll free 1-866-258-7159.

GORDON'S BLUEGRASS TRIVIA QUIZ
Submitted by Gordon Daugherty

Who wrote the bluegrass classic "Dear Old Dixie"?

(a) Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs
(b) Earl Scruggs
(c) Dewitt "Snuffy" Jenkins
(d) the Barnett brothers
(e) I don't know

Probably (e). F and S copyrighted DOD in the early '50s. However, Scruggs was playing it before he met Flatt and did so auditioning for Monroe in late 1945. Growing up, Scruggs knew a banjo player named "Snuffy" Jenkins who started playing the song in about 1930, when Scruggs was 6 years old. Many early banjo stars thought Jenkins wrote the song (Don Reno, for example). In 1988, after playing the song almost 60 years, Jenkins said he learned it from the Barnett brothers, from next-door Polk County in western North Carolina.

(sources: Banjo Newsletter, Jun '89; America's Music: Bluegrass; Masters Of The 5-String Banjo)



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THE LEDBETTER'S



"Kentucky Bluegrass from the Heart O' Texas" is the slogan of San Antonio's Ledbetters Bluegrass band. Beginning in 1988 as the husband and wife duo of Kathy and Spencer Drake, the Ledbetter's were officially launched when their brother-in-law, David (Uncle Dave) Reiff joined them to play upright bass in 1990. In 1991, fiddle player Larry Miller joined the group and in 1994 Jeff Long joined to play mandolin.

The Ledbetter's are progressive and enjoy crossing musical boundaries, however they are bluegrass through and through. Their enthusiasm for traditional songs by greats such as Monroe and Stanley is matched only by their love for the music. They might play an up-tempo bluegrass version of Roy Acuff's "Streamlined Cannon Ball", belt out a traditional instrumental such as "Cluck Old Hen", and then turn around and put Kathy's sweet voice to work on a contemporary number such as "He Never Did Return". They also regularly perform one of Larry's original songs "Mountain Of The Whispering Wind", a gripping and haunting mountain song.

The Ledbetters have one album to their credit entitled "Early Morning Train", three of the cuts on the album being co-written by Austin's very own Cara Cooke, including the title song. Cara also sings harmony vocals on several of the cuts including "Mountain Of The Whispering Wind". This song also features San Marcos native David Henry on dobro. David also helped produce the album.

The Ledbetters are no stranger to Austin area bluegrass folks. Through the years they have performed several times at the Zilker Park Spring Music Festival, CTBA Picnics, The Old Settlers Bluegrass Festival in Round Rock, Artz Rib House, and they have been regulars at the Manchaca Fire Station.

They have also covered quite a-bit of territory outside the Central Texas area during their twelve years of existence. Performances have ranged from the Texas Folklife Festival in San Antonio to the mountains of Cloudcroft New Mexico, "Springtime In The Rockies" Bluegrass Festival to the eastern mountains of Olive Hill, KY for the Carter County Shrine Club Bluegrass Festival and back to the flatlands of Dodge City KS for the annual "Sawlogs And Strings" Bluegrass Festival. On these trips they have shared billings with such bluegrass legends as Ralph Stanley, J.D.Crowe, Larry Sparks, The Osbourne Brothers, The Bluegrass Cardinals, Eddie Adcock and Charlie Louvin.

The Ledbetters Bluegrass Band promises to keep the sound of bluegrass music alive and well by playing "Kentucky Bluegrass From the Heart O' Texas!"

TEXAS BLUEGRASS LEGACY

CURTAIN TALK AT THE PARAMOUNT THEATRE 2-16-03
THOMAS PITTMAN

While Bluegrass may seem to many to be an ancient musical form, its entire history has elapsed during the lifetime of many in this room. Although the roots of bluegrass go back for centuries, even before the founding of this country, the first Bluegrass band was formed just after World War II when Bill Monroe added Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs to his Bluegrass Boys, along with Chubby Wise and Howard Watts, aka, Cedric Rainwater. Because Bill Monroe was already a member of the Grand Ole Opry, this new sound was exposed immediately over the airways to vast areas of the country, including Texas. The mountain and Piedmont areas of the South responded quickly by producing musicians and bands that approximated the fire and energy of the Bluegrass Boys. It was years before Monroe could appreciate this development as a tribute. For years he felt ripped off, even to the point of trying to keep the Stanley Brothers and Flatt and Scruggs off his record label and the Opry itself. Keep in mind that during the early years of Bluegrass, there was nothing recognized as Bluegrass music. What we now call Bluegrass was just called Country music, or more pejoratively, hillbilly music. It was played next to the more electrified forms of country music on the Grand Ole Opry stage as well as on their touring shows. The first use of "Bluegrass" as a musical genre does not seem to have happened until 1959.

Bluegrass spread more slowly outside the South, but it did not go unnoticed in Texas. Several factors contributed to the growth of Bluegrass in Texas. One was the Grand Ole Opry. In the days when there was only AM radio, and not that many stations, a clear channel signal from WSM in Nashville could bring the Grand Ole Opry to any part of Texas. Another factor that did not occur to me until I began to research this topic was the military. Carl Vinson's chairmanship of the House Armed Services Committee brought the pork home to his district, and along with that pork came tens of thousands of GI's, many of them from the South.

Musical considerations that made Texas fertile grounds for Bluegrass include a strong fiddle tradition and a general willingness to absorb musical influences of all sorts. Of the five instruments in the original Bluegrass band, four were commonly found in Western Swing bands: guitar, fiddle, mandolin and bass. Although these were played in slightly different styles, the instruments and the expertise to play them were readily available in Texas. The banjo proved to be more problematic. Buck White said that when he lived in Texas, the closest banjo players were in Duncan and Tahlequah Oklahoma. The desire to play Bluegrass was strong enough that they would drive great distances to get together for social picking, but the distances were prohibitive for any band formation.

Buck White got his first mandolin in 1949. Before that he had played mostly piano in Western dance bands. He did not, however, switch from the piano to the mandolin, but rather played guitar in the early versions of the family band. They moved from Wichita Falls to Ft. Smith AR in 1962 where he formed a band with his wife and daughters and Arlen Johnson and Ralph Thomas. They got wind of the first Bluegrass festival in Fincastle, VA in 1965 only after it was over, but they were there for the second one in 1966. The promoter, Carlton Haney, heard them in the camping area and put them on the show that same year. The rest is history. They eventually moved to Nashville where they still reside.

The Mayfield Bros., from Dimmitt, TX solved the banjo problem by simply omitting it. I never heard them, but Doc Hamilton tells me that they were as close to a Bluegrass sound as you could get without a banjo. Edd, Smokey and Herb Mayfield were descendent on both sides of the family from musicians from North Carolina. The Mayfields migrated from NC through Arkansas and eventually to West Texas. The Drakes, on the other side, migrated from the Hendersonville, NC area to several Texas destinations before settling in West Texas. The Mayfield parents met in the Wichita Falls area. Both families had strong musical histories, and it was natural that the Mayfield Bros. should form a band. They played at a jamboree in Lubbock every Saturday night from 1948 to 1950 as well as occasional visits to the Louisiana Hayride. It was there that Bill Monroe heard them and hired Edd away to become the first Bluegrass Boy from Texas. He played with Monroe on 3 different occasions. The first was for about a year beginning in 1952 until, Herb says, he was "starved out." It should be noted that Rock and Roll in general, and Elvis in particular, had a devastating effect on Mr. Monroe's bottom line for many years, starting about this time. Mayfield

-continued-

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returned to the Bluegrass Boys in 1954 and recorded "The First Whippoorwill" and "Christmas Time's A'Coming." Once again he was starved out but returned in 1956. In April of 1958 he recorded the "I Saw the Light" album and died of leukemia on the road with Monroe in July of 1958 at the age of 28.

The Mayfields, according to Alan Munde, were a tremendous influence on the Lubbock rock & roll scene, especially on Buddy Holly and Sonny Curtis, who was distantly related by marriage to the Mayfields.

The first name that comes up as a banjo player in Texas, or at least in North Texas, was Eddie Shelton. Born in Tennessee and raised in the Dallas area, he returned to Texas from the Dayton, Ohio area where he had been employed by National Cash Register. Upon returning to Texas he formed a group called the Stone Mountain Boys with Mitchell Land, Tootie Williams and Lonnie Kraft. They were proficient enough that they won the band contest at the second Bill Monroe Bluegrass Festival at Bean Blossom, IN in 1968. Shelton put out records with the Stone Mountain Boys as well as at least one under his own name. He continued to play with the Leon Valley Bluegrass until his death a couple of years ago. It is hard to overestimate the influence of Eddie Shelton on banjo playing in Texas. He was mentor to both Alan Munde and Danny Barnes, both of whom went on to become banjo instructors, so his influence carries on geometrically, beyond his death, through them.

Many of you in the Austin Bluegrass community are familiar with Doc Hamilton, who lived and played in the Austin area on more than one occasion. If you have seen him in the past 15 years or so, it was likely as a fiddler or mandolin player, but you may be surprised, as I was, to find out that he played his first Bluegrass as a banjo player. He had been a Chet Atkins style guitar player prior to that, but was encouraged to try banjo because of the shortage of banjo players at that time and because of his demonstrated dexterity with fingerpicks. Virgil Bryant, who had played banjo with Jimmy Martin on the Louisiana Hayride in Shreveport, was his early mentor on banjo. Through military assignments he hooked up with Buck White before White left Texas, and then again in Arkansas. Through an assignment with NASA he spent time in Houston where he played and recorded with Bill Northcut. Northcut was a Texas fiddler who also sold and repaired fiddle in the Houston area. Together they recorded an album on the Stoneway label. Stoneway was owned by R.M. Stone, who also put out records by Erle Garner, Chubby Wise and Paul Buskirk.

A common thread amongst all of the stories related so far is that of traveling great distances to assemble the necessary ingredients for a Bluegrass band. Such was not the case in Austin where there was a complete bluegrass band beginning in 1953. Jim Barr moved to Austin from South Carolina as a result of a military assignment in 1949. By 1953 he had put together the Texas Bluegrass Boys with Leon Campbell, Harold Franks and Lonnie Leighton. They changed the name to Grassfire in 1960 evidently to accommodate the addition of Jim's daughter Sherry on guitar and vocals and Ginger Evans on Bass. They managed to hold things together for 31 years, playing their last gig in 1984.

Their early gigs were from the period when Bluegrass had no identity other than Country, or hillbilly music. They played high schools, pizza parlors, parades, and many times opened for touring Opry acts at the Palmer auditorium. There they opened shows that included Ernest Tubb, Kitty Wells, Hank Snow, Bill Monroe, Jim & Jesse and Johnnie and Jack. They also recorded 4 LP albums.

Strictly speaking, Alan Munde and Byron Berline were from Oklahoma, but there was considerable cultural miscegenation across the Red River in the early days, and Munde has since become a naturalized Texas citizen. Berline played with Eddie Shelton sometimes, and Munde filled in when Shelton was unavailable. Munde went to Nashville for two years beginning in 1969 to play with Jimmy Martin, then Berline and Munde went to Los Angeles to form the first incarnation of Country Gazette in 1972. Both returned to Oklahoma but in 1986 Munde moved to Levelland, TX to join the faculty of South Plains, TX. More on this later.

I arrived in Texas in November of 1974 to find a fair amount of bluegrass, mostly centered around the Austin Friends of Traditional Music meetings at the Split Rail. The most visible bluegrass at that time in Austin was the Alfalfa Bros., which included Dennis McDaniel on mandolin, and a rotating cast of other members including Wyatt Deitrick, Jimmy Kubecka, Mark Maniscalco, Marshall Wilborn and Ed Bradfield among others. There were other musicians and aggregations accumulating in town around that time, and in 1978 the Central Texas Bluegrass Association was formed. There is an excellent history of the CTBA in the current edition of the CTBA newsletter written by Ken Brown. In fact, upon reading such a complete and detailed history it became clear to me that Ken Brown should be giving this talk, not me.

I don't know when it was formed, but the Bay Area Bluegrass Association in the Houston area has been around for many years. They put on a great festival near Hempstead every year and host the Texas Banjo championship.

During the 70's and 80's banjo players started piling up in San Antonio. At one time there was a band consisting of 5 great banjo players: Mark Maniscalco, Bill Holden, Lang Scruggs, Bill Holden and Don Van Winkle. I never saw them, so I don't know which one got to play the banjo. The most enduring band from San Antonio has been TVA, which consists of Hank Harrison on mandolin and a rotating cast of

-Curtain Talk continued-

other players. They won the Bluegrass band contest at the Kerrville Bluegrass Festival pretty much every year they were eligible.

Speaking of festivals, there are several long running festivals in Texas: McKinney, Sheppard and Glen Rose as well as Bluegrass festivals that came and went in Kerrville and Nagadoches. The big festival nowadays is the Old Settler's Festival in Dripping Springs. It is not strictly a Bluegrass festival, but they feature many of the most prominent Bluegrass touring acts.

Texas continues to produce some of the finest Bluegrass musicians. I am sometimes privileged to substitute for Larry Monroe on a KUT radio show called "Texas Radio." While I try to play material that would appeal to his regular audience, I also try to play some material that is outside the usual scope of Larry's interest and expertise. That would include Bluegrass. A surprising number of the top Bluegrass bands have Texas connections including:

Charlie Waller - Country Gentlemen- Henderson, TX

III Tyme Out- Russell Moore- Pasadena, TX

Hot Rize- Charles Sawtelle- Austin, TX

Lynn Morris Band- Lynn Morris- Lamesa, TX

Marshall Wilborn, Austin, TX

Country Gazette- Alan Munde and Joe Carr

Bad Livers

Peter Rowan who owns a house in Medina, TX

Longview- Marshall Wilborne

Karl Shifflet & Big Country

Dixie Chicks- Emily and Martie Erwin who played with the Blue Night Express in Dallas and Natalie Maines from Lubbock. They had the biggest selling album in any genre last year that had bluegrass cut on it, Li'l Jack Slade.

Texas may not be the most prominent state in Bluegrass music, but it certainly holds its own with most. I can think of one area in which Texas does seem to be the leader, and that is that of Bluegrass education. While East Tennessee State offers a few courses in Bluegrass, South Plains College in Levelland is the only college there is that has a degree program in Bluegrass and Commercial Country Music. Their alumni include some of the more successful musicians in Bluegrass today. They include:

Ron Block/ Alison Krauss

Mike Bub/ Del McCoury Band

Stewart Duncan/ Nashville Bluegrass Band

Jed Hughes/ Patty Loveless & Down from the Mountain

Natalie Maines/ Dixie Chicks

In addition to their residential studies, they also have a line of video lessons. As best I can tell, the biggest vendor of Bluegrass instruction videos is Homespun, from Woodstock, NY, but most of the rest come from Texas. In addition to the Texas Music in Video series from South Plains College there is Slim Richey's Ridgerunner courses out of Wimberly, and one other outfit from right here in Austin.

I would like to thank Texas Folklife Resources for recognizing the vital and continuing contributions of Bluegrass music to our rich musical heritage here in Texas, and for bringing Buck White and his family here tonight.

I would also like to thank those that assisted in the preparation of this talk. When I agreed to do it, I thought I'd just tell what I know. Then it occurred to me that I didn't really know all that much. So I decided to contact those who did. I am deeply indebted to Buck

White, Alan Munde, Doc Hamilton, Jim Barr and Herb and Dorothy Mayfield. I recognize that the topic of Bluegrass in Texas is more deserving of a book than a 15 minute talk, so I know there was more left out than was included. I freely acknowledge that there are many localities, time periods and musicians that were omitted, but I hope I hit the high spots at least.

I will close with a quote from Doc Hamilton. "Whatever music is still left in me, I owe it to Buck White."

Editor's Note: This article was contributed and copyrighted by Tom Pittman, 2003.



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SOUTH AUSTIN JUG BAND - CAROLINE HERRING
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ONION CREEK CRAWDADDIES - THE GREENCARDS
THE SPURS OF THE MOMENT - REEL TIME TRAVELERS
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