

Central

Texas Bluegrass

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IBMA Member

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July 1, 2012



Elliott's Ramblers



Interview with Elliott & Janice Rogers

The Listening Post



MilkDrive Waves

In case you weren't paying attention, Austin has one of the best jazz-grass bands in the world. I don't know how they do it but Milk-Drive's **Brian Beken, Dennis Ludiker, Noah Jeffries, & Matt Mefford** have released another new sophisticated CD. "Waves" release was at the Cactus on June 19th and audiences were once again floored by their incredible musicianship.

The new CD consists of four covers and six originals. Again, the guys teamed up with producer **Bil VornDick** (who has produced Alison Kraus & Bela Fleck) and features **Noam Pikelny** (of the Punch Brothers) on a really great version of The Beatles, "Dear Prudence". Songs like Ludiker's "Gargamel's Cat" & "Tom's Ranch" show why these young guys keep burning up the fiddle contests. Dennis won first place in the Texas State Championship Fiddler's Frolics in Hallettsville this past April. Get this one!



The Listening Post is a forum established to monitor bluegrass musical recordings, live performances, or events in Texas. Our mailbox sometimes contains CDs for us to review. Here is where you will find reviews of the CD's Central Texas Bluegrass Association receives as well as reviews of live performances or workshops.

Blue Bell & Bluegrass Festival in Llano is Jam Good



(I to r) Alan Munde & Rolf Sieker

PHOTO BY KEN BROWN

The music started Friday evening with the **Taste of Llano**, with lots of jamming and free food. Then the jammers moved to **The Badu House** for the rest of the night. The live music started promptly at 9 AM Saturday, with bands playing every hour through 6 PM. We were treated to a broad and eclectic mix of Bluegrass music, anchored in tradition with the great performance of the **Alan Munde Gazette**. It was wonderful to hear Alan Munde in such great form! The jamming wasn't far behind, starting before 11 AM, and continuing through the day. Saturday ended with jamming that evening at The Badu House. There were 4 active circles much of the evening, with 2 circles still going strong as midnight approached. Jammers attended from all areas of the state - West Texas to Houston and Dallas to the Valley.

The music started again at 9 AM Sunday with lots of Gospel Bluegrass through the day, ending with a special set by the **Lackey Family**. The jammers were a little later getting started, but were tuning up by noon.

Special thanks go to **Jason James** for such great sound! Listeners and players alike commented on the great quality of the sound from the PA system. Finally, a very special "thank you" goes to The Badu House for their tremendous support of the bands and jammers throughout the weekend. Mark **May 24-26, 2013** when we'll host more music and jamming! - *Jeffrey White*



The SOUTHWEST BLUEGRASS CLUB's Saturday, July 21st Bluegrass Show

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Doors Open at 10 AM
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- ➔ The Cooke Brothers
- ➔ Salt Creek

Jam

Dinner Break from 5 to 6

Jam on Stage During Dinner Break

Evening Bands - Starting at 6 PM

- ➔ The Lackey Family
- ➔ Bluestem Grass
- ➔ Ellis County Reunion
- ➔ Salt Creek
- ➔ The Cooke Brothers

Jam

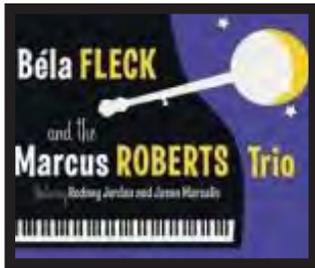
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Picks, Happenings, and Releases



Bela Fleck takes the banjo full circle back to jazz on his latest CD *“Crossing the Imaginary Divide”*. The title is a rather tongue-in-cheek commentary by teaming up with the jazz great **Marcus Roberts Trio**. The song “Petunia” is pretty close to bluegrass with a piano. Everything else is jazz- all instrumental. This is an easy CD to put on if you are in the mood for jazz without saxophones, trombones, or horns. Don’t expect to find this Rounder Records CD in the bluegrass section. This is a hands down, jazz CD.



CTBA provides financial supports to non-profit organizations such as KOOP Radio, HAAM, and Old Settlers Music Festival. This past month CTBA once again gave The Health Alliance for Austin Musicians (HAAM) a donation of \$250. Look for CTBA and bluegrass to be mentioned in the advertisements for the HAAM Benefit Day. **Bands interested in playing for the HAAM Benefit Day/CTBA Showcase on October 2nd should contact ctba@central-texasbluegrass.org**



Bluegrass Heritage Foundation brings **Special Consensus** back to Dallas for a concert and instrument/jamming workshop at Sons of Hermann Hall on **Sunday, July 22**. The workshop will begin at 4pm, concert at 6pm. The instrument and jamming workshop includes instrumental pointers, jamming etiquette, help with hearing chord progressions, and much more. The workshop is open to all instruments, ages, and skill levels. Show tickets are \$12 in advance / \$15 at the door. The workshop is \$20 at the door.



Austin musician **Karen Abrahams**, a native of Taft, TX and the Artist Profiled in this newsletter (March 2012) got her “star” revealed on June 2nd at the **SOUTH TEXAS MUSIC WALK OF FAME** – in the WaterStreet Market, in Corpus Christi. Karen’s band recently performed at the Blue Bell and Bluegrass Festival where she went from bluegrass to blues much to the delight of the Llano audience. Check out www.karenabrahams.com for info or CTBA’s Calender of Events.



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Meet a CTBA Member: Mary Conn

Introduce yourself. Tell us your name, a little bit about yourself, what city you live in, and why you joined CTBA.

My name is Mary Conn, I love bluegrass music and I live in Galveston and around Houston. I grew up in Houston and lived in Texas my whole life until about 12 ½ years ago when I got a wild hair and moved to CA with my children. Now I'm back, and happy to be here! California is great and I had some great times there, and expect more, and there are some great artists there, but I'm happy to be home.

I joined CTBA because I wanted to be connected with the bluegrass musicians in the area; what better way than to join up, show up, pick a little, talk a little, meet some folks, and maybe be of a little service sometime when something needs doing? – like answering questions!

Do you play an instrument?

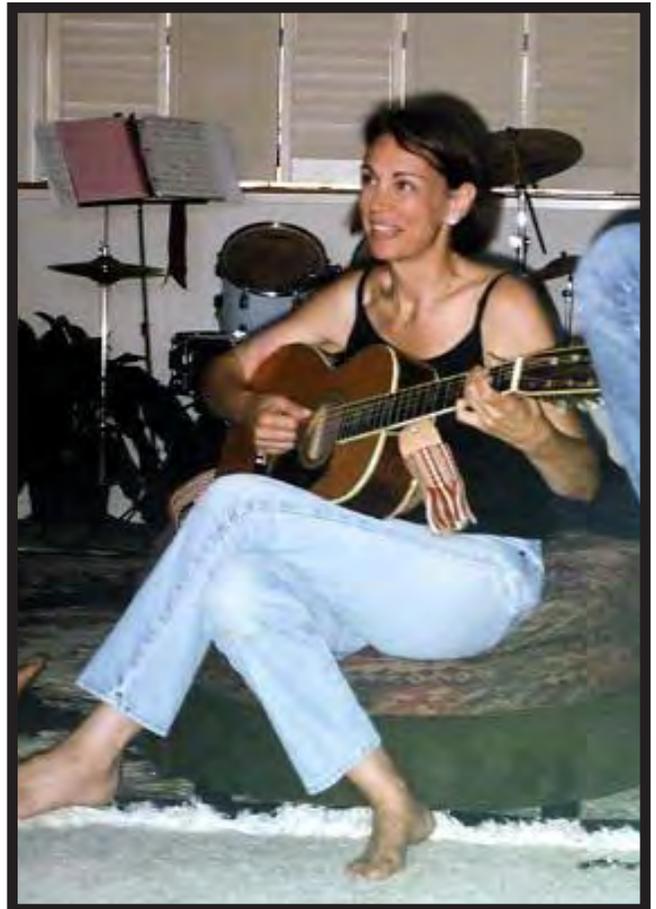
I play a little bass, and a very little other stuff, guitar mostly. I was a rhythm player back when rhythm players didn't flat pick. (Go ahead, ask me about the bagpipes.)

What bluegrass artist do you listen to the most?

Well I love the old guys, almost all of them, the harmonies and the old style playing. Then I love the hot stuff, Missy Raines and Jim Hurst and Doc Watson and Norman Blake and the Claire Lynch Band, and the O'Brien's and well, honestly, just about everybody.

What is your all time favorite bluegrass song?

Well, I guess it would have to be an old instrumental I have with just three instruments, doing Somewhere Over the Rainbow. Somebody gave me a tape of it many years ago and it still makes me almost cry to hear that dobro. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5TwaKlulU8>





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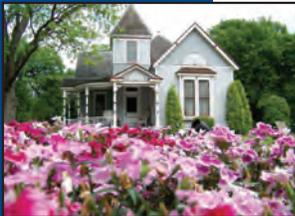
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This event is brought to you by the City of Farmers Branch, Texas and the Bluegrass Heritage Foundation.

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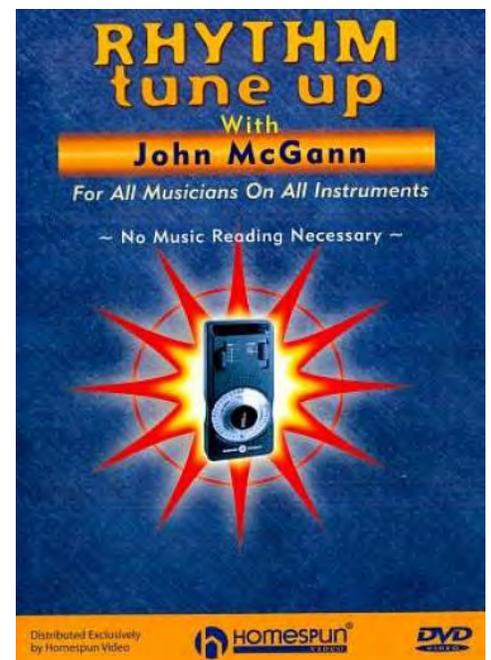
Learnin' a Little: Get the Rhythm

One of the “avoidable things” that can bust up a jam is for someone to call out a song and then fail to keep a steady rhythm as they lead others through the song. For that reason alone, everyone should include a little rhythmic study in their practice session. For guitarist, a good Carter-style rhythm can carry you through most jams but it has to remain steady. A bass player who is not driving the 1 & 3 beat will also cause the musicians to get confused, especially if the mandolin player is listening to the bass player to try to find the 2 & 4 to place their chops on. Learning to play on the beat is just as important as learning the skill of playing after or before the beat. Study of these different rhythmic patterns will improve your ear and your playing.

It doesn't matter what level of musician you are, you should include a metronome or a backing track in your practice. There are online sites that have free backing tracks. A quick search of Professor Google gave me Bluegrassbackingtracks.com, drbluegrass.com, as well as sites like Banjo Hangout and Mandolin Café. I've used Band-in-a-Box but I offer one word of caution when using backing tracks. Use them to perfect your solos. Find the “rough spots” in your solos and fix those. If you just put on the backing tracks and jam away, you're not doing yourself any favors and you may just reinforce some bad habits (voice of experience speaking). It is better to use the backing track to record your solo and then continue to use it to improve your sound, technique, and overall rhythm.

One of the best DVD's for studying rhythm was produced in 2004 by John McGann. The DVD title is “Rhythm Tune Up” and is still available. John provides a comfortable look at working with a metronome, playing on beats 1 & 3 versus 2 & 4, straight and swing 8ths, shuffle time, $\frac{3}{4}$ waltz's, Celtic & jigs, practicing rhythm to melody transitions, playing on, after, or behind the beat, subdividing the beat, and practicing tips. Although John uses the guitar and mandolin during the demonstrations, any instrumentalist can benefit from the training. Unfortunately, John passed away back in April of this year while still an instructor at Berklee. John was a great musician, instructor, and mentor to many. He will be missed.

This topic will be the topic of the free workshop at the “Second Saturday” July jam in Fayetteville. - Tom Duplissy



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Texas Jam Location Profile: Fayetteville

The Texas Jam Location Profile takes a look at jam sessions and tells you a little bit about each one. The opinions are based on a specific visit and the opinions of folks attending the jam.

Name of Jam, When Started: Texas Pickin' Park, 2003

Sponsor & Contact info: Tom Duplissey (512) 415-3177

When/Interval: Second Saturday of each month, April - November

RV Hookups/Camping/Lodging: LCRA Park (Oak Thicket Park) RV 30/50 & Cabins, Several B&B's in Fayetteville, hotels available in La Grange,

Other (Type Music, Stage show, Workshops, etc.): Mostly bluegrass, some swing, Gospel, No Stage Shows except sometimes in April & November. Free workshop each Saturday.

Review & comments: Shameless plug. The Texas Pickin Park is quite easy for me to review since I run it. The jams take place on the city square. The old Courthouse is no longer used but is available to walk through and there have been jams inside too. The old Firehouse on the square has workshops on Saturday and a Slow-Jam led by Scott Armstrong. There are usually three to five jams going on around the square. Listeners can enjoy roaming around between the jams. A small number of folding chairs are available for seating by musicians and listeners alike. Last month a small group of photographers, led by local resident, Jerry Brown, descended on the jam and took the pictures below. Thanks Jerry and all the photographers.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE LIVE OAK CAMERA CLUB. PHOTOGRAPHERS WERE JERRY & JEANETTE BROWN, KEN & PATTY SPARKS, AND BECKY ZAJICEK.



Artist Profile: Elliott & Janice Rogers

I caught up with Elliott & Janice at their nice home in Wimberley. We had a great relaxed time talking. I could have spent several more hours talking and probably would have come away with enough to write a book. Janice & Elliot have been a part of the Austin songwriter scene for years. Many of us know them in The Ramblers, with the Alan Munde Gazette, Ranch Road 12, 3-Hands High, Hays County Burn Band, and many others. We only had time to talk about a few of the bands. I was interested in the time they had spent here in Austin before moving to Albuquerque. If you are in the process of recording a CD soon, you might want to give a listen to Elliott's material. He is a very good songwriter. I hope you enjoy reading this. - Tom Duplissey

Your bio says you were born in Osceola, Arkansas (pronounced 'o-see-o-la') and then you later moved to Albuquerque in what year?

Elliott: I moved to Albuquerque when I was in the 5th grade. My Dad was in the Air Force so we traveled around to a few places. Not as much as a lot of people did but we lived in Michigan for a while and Indiana but we ended up in Albuquerque and I stayed there through High School.

Then I went out of High School into the Army and went to Ft Hood and that's how I got to Texas. Ft Hood. Which Division?

Elliott: 2nd Armor Division.

When were you there?

Elliott: I got out December 7th, 1979. I was there for three years before that. Everybody in my AIT (Advanced Individual Training) except for me went to either South Korea or to Germany, which is where I wanted to go. Me and one other guy went to Ft Hood. I stayed there the whole time.

Your bio says that your trio in High School opened for Doc Watson. Tell me about that.

Elliott: We were the opening band for the opening band (laughs). It was great.

Was Merle with him back then?

Elliott: It was just Doc by himself. This would have been '74 or '75. We opened up for the Clear Ditch Ramblers who opened for Doc.

Was it all bluegrass?

Elliott: Yes.

So how did you get into playing bluegrass?

Elliott: Through Wayne Shrubsall. He was in Big River Boys and my little trio snuck into this bar in Golden, NM. It was called the Golden Inn to see the Big River Boys. There was Wayne playing banjo, Hans Keiser on dobro, Joe Demar playing mandolin and they were all like long haired hippie guys with flasks of whiskey in their back pockets. People were dancing and we were just standing there going, "holy crap! Now that is cool as hell!" I just couldn't believe it. So I took a few banjo lessons from Wayne. I played banjo in the trio.



Was Wayne teaching over at Jack's music store then or was that later?

Elliott: It might have been. Was that with Teddy's? No, Jack Doutett. Yes, that's right.

That's where I bought my first good banjo. In fact Wayne was my first teacher even though we were playing every night at the Chelsea there at Coronado Mall. It was a real treat for me to see Wayne again at Camp Bluegrass...what...twenty years later. I love that guy. He is phenomenal.

Janice: Wayne was probably my biggest musical influences. We played with him for so very, very long. He made me realize that you could do many things on the banjo. It wasn't just for bluegrass music. You could adapt it to many genres.

He knows a gagillion songs in so many styles and he'll wear you out in a jam.

Elliott: He's great with words too.

So I'm taking us off track a little. How did you get from Ft. Hood to Austin?

Elliott: I had this little trio in the Army. The banjo player was in my company and the bass player was in my company. We pick around Ft Hood and we would come to Austin and pick at Maggie Mae's. Nobody wanted to come with me so the first time I ever came I ended up taking a bus. I got off at the bus station and walked down to Town Lake Park it was late at night and I was like "this is beautiful" got over to Congress and looked down and there was the Capital and I just thought it was the coolest place. That had to be about '78.

In '80 you began to do some work with Robert Earl Keen. How did you meet him?

Elliott: Through Darden Smith. Robert was opening for Darden and Darden would open for him...and that's how I met Lyle and that group. At the same time I was hanging out with Blaze (Foley) and Townes (Van Zandt), Jubal Clark, Calvin Russell, and those guys. When I got out of the service I was married and we ended up buying a house in Austin. We shared the house with my bass player from my company, Paul Sanchez. He and I would back up a bunch of people. I eventually met Janice and that was the formation of the Ramblers.

(To Janice) So you were living in Austin too?

Janice: Yes, I got to Austin in '72 or '73 and just ran around Austin for a long time. I played with Bill Gracy, Joe Gracy's brother and started getting more involved in music. I came from a small rural town. *Where?*

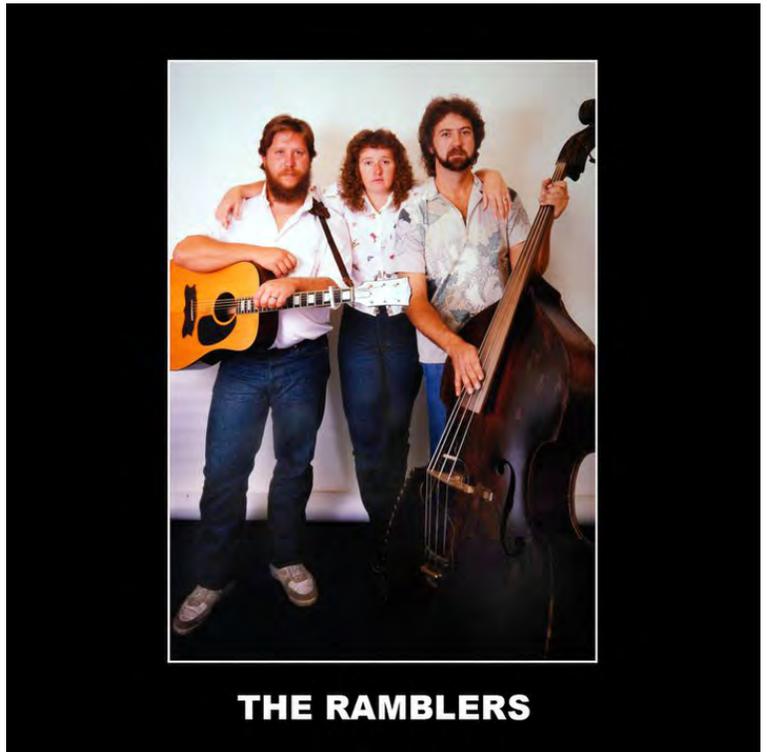
Janice: White Deer over near Amarillo. I sang gospel my whole entire life. Grew up in the church. I started singing in the adult choir when I was four because they realized I could sing harmonies. I got to Austin and I felt like 'these are my people, they play music, and they sing, they have fun and they swim...'

Were you playing an instrument then?

Janice: No, I just sang. I didn't play any stringed instrument until I was about 47 and the bass was the first instrument. Well, I tried to play mandolin....

Elliott: I tried to get her to play mandolin (laughing).

Janice: But I don't think that fast (more laughter).



THE RAMBLERS

OK, so it's Austin, late '70's early '80's, Blaze is still alive and you were playing with Townes. Did you back him up when Mickey. Was that when he went to work for Jimmie Dale or...

Janice: Mickey and Pat had a baby and Mickey was off the road for a while so that's where the Ramblers came in.

So who all backed him up.

Elliott: It was Paul and I...

Janice: I did a little work with them. I wasn't there all the time but I did get to get up and sing with them.

Elliott: And we had a fiddler...actually he was a violinist, he wasn't really a fiddle player. His name was Ken Todd, who is now in Colorado, but Ken was in the band as well. He was a great player. We did a lot of stuff with Darden too and that's how we got on that first album with Robert Earl.

Well now Blaze and Townes were pretty heavy drinkers about that time so I wanted to ask you if you had songwriting influences during the more coherent moments or were there any? (the picture below is a screen capture of a 1984 video of Blaze Foley with Janice and Elliott singing harmonies).

Elliott: It was great. After gigs it would only be three or four o'clock in the morning. There would be Rich Minus, George Enslie, Blaze, Townes, and...uh, shoot I can't think of his name...he died too...hell we're all dead... Calvin (Russell). We'd all get together after hours at somebody's house swapping tunes and it was just fricking awesome. One of my favorite memories of that whole thing was after one of those Austin Outhouse gigs. We'd



get done at two, pack it up, two-thirty...three o'clock...there was a guy that used to have this white convertible Cadillac with red interior with longhorns on the front. I think his gig was kind of like a taxi-for-hire kind of thing. One night it was Blaze, Townes, Calvin, Jubal, and me. We were all in this huge Cadillac and we would drive by people...they would see the vehicle and then they would see all these weird people inside and they would think that it must be something cool so we would wave and they would all wave (laughing). That night we were taking Jubal to his girlfriend's house. So we're parked out front and he hollers up to the second story window, "Hey baby! Am I welcome?" She opened up the window and says "I'm letting my hair down for you" so he turns to us and says "Good Night Boys!" (laughing).

I wonder if that's where the idea for the Blaze's song about a Cadillac. What was the name of that song?

Elliott: (singing) Let me ride in your big Cadillac. That might have been where that came from.

Janice: Unbeknownst to me, and I still don't understand it, but Blaze could be the biggest alcoholic but then he always had these model-type of women who fell all over him. So he would show up at some of the places we were playing and he would get out of the stretch limo with six or seven beautiful, stunning women.

Elliott: Then the next night he'd be sleeping under a pool table.

You worked on those tribute CDs to Blaze many years later. Those albums were real eclectic. Stylistically

they are all over the map.

Elliott: Yes.

Janice: They wanted to do Blaze's songs but they wanted the artists to bring in their own interpretations. That's what they wanted.

Elliott: I was trying to stick to how he did them. I did Cold, Cold World..(singing) "ain't it a cold, cold world". When I listened back to it I wish I had done it better, or in a different key or something. It was the spirit of the thing that was important to a lot of people. He's still my muse as far as what I think is a good song.

Didn't you write a song. What was it? A Song for Blaze or something like that?

Elliott: You know, I was thinking about that today. It wasn't about Blaze. It was just a song that I think Blaze would have liked. I was thinking about that, oddly enough, today because we were riding back from a camping trip up in Colorado and I'm riding in the back of a pickup truck because it was all crowded in the truck and that's where I wrote it. At that point in time I was sort of drawing off of big nature themes. That's where that came from. It didn't have anything to do with Blaze or his personality, songwriting, but it was just something that he would like.

There was another song called "Getting Over You". It was on the BFI series...

Janice: Yes, we did that on one...

So you went from Austin to Albuquerque? How or why did that happen?

Elliott: Around '84, my parent's health was going downhill. Janice and I decided to go help them for a couple of years and then come back to Austin but we ended up staying there for a while.

Janice: For me, one of the reasons I wanted to leave Austin is was fast and hard living. I wasn't used to that. I came from a small town and got really involved in music and watched people come and go in the bar scene. Some of it I liked and some of it I didn't. I needed to control where my life was going and I didn't want to end up just being a bar person.

So did you start performing in Albuquerque then?

Elliott: We were kind of at a pinnacle. We were playing with everybody at that time.

Janice: Nancy Griffith was looking at us to see if she wanted us to do some work with her. We tossed around whether we wanted to go to Nashville or not and decided that we really didn't.

Elliott: The second day in Albuquerque I called Wayne. I had to find out if he was still playing because I wanted to get a good bluegrass band together. So he said yes, sure. It was Janice, Wayne and me. Janice was playing the cheese grader at the time.

Cheese grader?

Janice: Yes I was playing the cheese grader with a towel kept in it on three sides and it was a rhythm instrument.

Elliott: Until Bob Goldstien talked her out of it.

Janice: He was making fun of me and so I quit playing it. We met Bob when we were doing a concert on the plaza in Albuquerque downtown. We were playing with Townes & Blaze for the Balloon Festival.

Elliott: Townes had a broken arm. Bob was a huge Townes fan. Just a fanatic and he saw us there with Townes so that's how we met Bob.

Was Bob playing with Bill and Bonnie (Hearne) at that time?

Elliott: No. What was he doing?

Janice: He was in Shot of Gold and Caravan. He played bluegrass for fun at that time but his primary means of making a living was to play top 40 country & western tunes in the big bars in Albuquerque. *The steak house gigs, we used to call them Bunkhouse Bands? Those guys made good money. Well now*



you both played gigs with Bill and Bonnie. How did ya'll meet?

Elliott: We had heard them when we were in Texas. Tomas Eliot Adler is our friend in Santa Fe who is a great claw hammer banjo guy. There's a banjo player that's also a Tom Adler but that's a different guy...our friend was a Santa Fe native who was friends with Bill and Bonnie. He would take them around and be with them (I might point out here that Bill and Bonnie are both legally blind so throughout their musical career they had to rely on others to get them to and from gigs). We were also friends with John Egnés who was in the band. We knew a lot of the same people. We would see them playing in Santa Fe at the La Fonda. I would send a few of my songs, through Tom, to Bill to see if he wanted to do them. And Bill would say (in his best Bill Hearne impression) "Elliott, that's a beautiful song but it's just not a Bill and Bonnie tune". (lots of laughter because it was actually a very

good impersonation of Bill). He did like one of my tunes. Lonely Room. He does it every once in a while. He still does it. He hasn't recorded it but he performs it and that is a super honor to me. That's the coolest thing in the world to have Bill Hearne do one of my songs because he is so darn good.

Do you also know Mike (Hearne - his son)?

Elliott: You know that is the most amazing thing. After all of this...I've still never ever met. George has done stuff with him and our paths have crossed but we've never met. At some point, when we do, it's going to be pretty cool because of the same people that we know and the history that we share. It's just weird that we never met.

Janice: Our days in Albuquerque, once we got the band together we were going to play together for a very long time, Bob got us to go to festivals up in Colorado. He introduced us to that music scene, which then for the next eighteen years we played at festivals all over Colorado, just because of Bob. We got introduced to large number of people that we are still very close to. We played at Bluegrass on the River festival for fifteen years and went back after five years, but it's now at the State Fair Grounds. We played alongside people like the Bluegrass Patriots and High Plains Tradition, the hard corps straight-ahead bluegrass musicians...

Did you ever play the Pagosa Springs festival?

Janice: Yes, we played there one year.

They have that festival in a perfect little spot in Pagosa Springs. Changing the subject now. Elliott, I want to ask you about your guitar playing. Although I did see a liner on one of the Blaze CDs that you played the snare drum.

Elliott: (laughing) I did? Surprise, surprise.

Seriously though, before I get to the guitar questions, do you play any other instruments?

Elliott: I played banjo when I was in High School.

Do you still play banjo?

Elliott: Yes, frailing is what I really like.

I've noticed when you play your acoustic guitar that your right hand, your strumming hand, with a closed hand and you always play the right notes. I say that because I've tried it several times and I never hit the right notes. How did you develop that technique? Did you play an electric?

Elliott: I never played electric that much. I have an electric and I've always had an electric growing up but I never done anything but flatpicking on it. I've never really posted a finger and done it that way. So it's always been a floating technique for me.

You're teaching guitar at Camp Bluegrass again this summer. So, as an instructor, do you have to put together your curriculum and give that to Joe? How does that work?

Elliott: Just about like that. I don't formally turn it into him but he always knows. When I go there to teach I often stay at his house so I say, "this is what I'm going to do". In most cases Alan has already seen it. It's not like a formal review process or anything. It does get looked at beforehand and if there are any questions we get those answered.

What are some things the students look forward to?

Elliott: It's going to be Tim May again for advanced. Dan Miller for intermediate and I'll be doing the beginning stuff. So I'll go through warm-up exercises, basic flatpicking, Carter style rhythm, pinky techniques...

You've taught there for how many years?

Elliott: Four or five years I think. I always stress out about what I'm going to teach but what it ends up being is based on the individuals in the class. There's always somebody that gets it better than somebody else so I can give them enough to keep them busy while I work with the ones that aren't getting it right away. I really, really enjoy doing it because I can see their progress and I get enthusiastic about it and they get enthusiastic about it. I have plenty of handouts to work on.

Janice: It builds that love for playing without intimidating them.

Elliott: That is the hardest hurdle to jump over. To get people that are beginning...just to get past the pain of their fingers on their left hand making chords. If they can get over that little hump they can progress rapidly. My main thing is to keep it as simple as possible. If you can accompany yourself in your room, with nobody else there, and make yourself happy playing the guitar then that's pretty neat.

When was the first time you went to Camp Bluegrass?

Elliott: The first time we went was as students because we wanted to go with Wayne.

Was that like '99? I was there that year also.

Elliott: I think so.

Janice: That was a life changer for me. Oh my gosh, that was so much fun.

Elliott: It's like living in Mayberry for a week.

You guys came back the next year or so as instructors. I remember sitting in your vocal class.

Elliott: That was great fun. A great class.

Janice: That was the year Dee-dee had cancer and they were looking for someone to replace her. So they brought Kathy Chiavola and she was going to do the technical side and she wanted us to come in and work with the people that were the natural born singers to do the harmony workshop.

Yes that was a fun time. I got something out of it and learned several new things to try. Wil Maring is coming this year to teach songwriting if she can get enough students. I've heard that she is quite good. You've written how many songs?

Elliott: Probably 70-100 that I would claim.

Do the two of you collaborate on songs?

Janice: Not really, I've thrown in ideas on songs but Elliott is the songwriter.

You've had some songs covered by other artists too. Your song "The Plains of St Augustine" has been covered by...

Janice: Jill Jones recorded that way before we ever met her.

How did she find it?

Elliott: It's a great story. Claude, our mandolin player from Albuquerque, is a state folklorist for New Mexico and he was playing at Naravisa at the Cowboy Poetry thing. Jill is a champion yodeler and cowboy poet. Claude played that song and she said, "man that's a great song, where's that from?" He gave her the tape and she contacted me, ended up recording it, actually paid me for it, which was very cool and then she ended up doing two more...maybe? I had never met her. She would send me the CDs when it was done and I thought, man, I like the way she does it better than I do. She kind of changed it a little bit around and did a great job with it. When we came back and moved back to Driftwood where I bought this property and then find out that she lives about 900 yards down the road from us.

How cool is that?

Elliott: The two people she was playing with, when we moved back here about two years ago, they were moving out to do something else and Janice and I just moved right in, started singing harmonies, and it was just the most amazing thing.

Janice: Having a great time too. To me, Elliott was always a songwriter, vocalist, and I love the way he plays guitar but I've always seen him as a songwriter. The Bluegrass Patriots have recorded one or two of his songs. Steve Spurgin, out of Nevada, has recorded a couple of Elliott's songs. So for me, when I think of him, I always think of him as a songwriter.

Going back, the time period when the both of you got together you were surrounded by some of Austin's finest songwriters.

Janice: I feel so honored to have been a part of that. My early adult life was unbelievable because of the songwriters that were there at that time and that we had access to.

Now Elliott, you mentioned to me once that you had gotten online recently with Pat Pattison and went through one of his courses. Can you tell me about that experience?

Elliott: I did two songs out of that class and it was the first online songwriting class that he had done. It was called "Writing from the Title". It was the most amazing way to look at songwriting for me. What you do with this method is if you were writing about a mountain, you would make a list of ideas that you wanted to convey, then you would go straight to the rhyming dictionary and you get five, or as many rhymes as you could get from your key words. Then you have rhymes to deal with. You would come up with a title to the song. That was part of the class. One of the titles I came up with was "What's His Name Says Hello". So that meter is dum-de-dum, dum-de-dum. You have that meter that you're working with, you already have several rhymes, so you're not writing completely off the top of your head and you get to that second verse and go, "what now".

So, you're putting all these tools in your toolbox before you start and all you do is reach in there and pull out the right tool for that part of the song?

Elliott: Yes, exactly. Of the two songs I wrote for the class, one of them was "What's His Name Says Hello", which is a pretty neat song, I mean, I like it. I don't do it that much. The other one that I wrote out of that class was a song called "Fields of Green". It was a song about my Uncle who was a WWII pilot. He was missing in action and they thought he had been lost at sea. It turns out that a farmer in France was plowing his field and he came across some plain parts and they did some discoveries, they found some dogtags, and did some DNA testing. It turns out that it was my Uncle Richard. There he was.

Janice: They thought they would never found him so for probably forty years the entire family thought that there just would never be a body and nobody ever thought he would be found. That was probably only fifteen years ago.

Elliott: Now he's buried in Arlington (National Cemetery). The song doesn't really relay all of that. The title, "Fields of Green" our house in Indiana was a roof above the corn, it was just a field of green, the house that they grew up in. Then he joins the Air Force and is standing in formation with other soldiers in a field of green and it continues on from there... But that Pat Pattison, I can't say enough great things about him. He's got three workbooks, at least, and another big thicker book. The way he looks at songwriting is real inspirational, funny, clever...it fires me up.

He's done several free workshops in Austin. I attended one of his workshops. It seems to me that with a work of art that is so personal, that it would be very difficult to stand there and have him take your song completely apart. As I watched him take others apart I felt a little empathy for the artist.

Elliott: Yes, that's the most brutal thing.

It's like he's taking your heart out and moving this valve over hear and...well, did you feel that way at all while you were working with him?

Elliott: That was part of the class. That was the hardest part of it. The students had to give critiques. It had to be constructive. You couldn't just say I know what I like and I know what I don't like. There was one guy in the class, nothing he did...I kept thinking...why are you here? I had to say why and not only why it needed something but how you can make it better. Constructive criticism is the hardest thing to do.

Janice: Elliott actually won the New Mexico Music Industry MicLine Award for a song that he wrote called "Forever You and I" that he wrote for me when I had cancer.

I thought you were diagnosed not that long ago.

Janice: Originally I got diagnosed in 1997 with renal cell cancer and then I had a huge scare about this time last year.

That's when I first heard...

Janice: With going through the whole oncology and every test known to mankind it put me through some changes. It sends me to such a dark place that it's very, very hard. Ultimately, in the end everything worked out just fine. I had a huge kidney stone (laughter).

Are you all still playing with Alan (Munde) as Ranch Road 12?

Elliott: Yes.

You both recently went back to Albuquerque to do a festival with the Ramblers? How did that go?

Janice: Yes and to a sold out crowd at another festival.

Where was it held?

Janice: It used to be called Bluegrass on the River but it's now called Bluegrass at the Fair in Pubelo.

So what's next?

Janice: Getting ready to record an album with Jill Jones (pictured right with their band, 3 Hands High). We play with Alan a lot but we've been playing with her primarily. She's a national champion yodeler.

Elliott: She's a great singer and a real strong rhythm player. She's a really good guitar player. She knows a ton of great songs.

As a trio?

Janice: Yes, every now and then we have a drummer, Jeff Hogan. Jeff plays with Peter Rowan and a lot of other people. When we're doing shows that need a



drummer then he sits in with us. We have a great time playing with Jill. Wednesday we're going to look at the studio we're interested in working in. Hopefully in the next month or so we'll start.

Are you writing new material for it?

Elliott: It has a lot of my original material but I haven't written anything new for it...yet. I'm actually recording an album with Alan that we're trying to get ready for Camp Bluegrass.

I liked the CD Alan did not too long ago with Adam Granger. Those two guys are so funny to hang out and listen to.

Elliott: That Adam Granger, one time in a slow jam at Camp Bluegrass there was a board that you could draw on and we were singing, "Long Black Veil". As we were singing it, he was drawing the pictures of it. He had the long black veil and the hangman's noose. He would rip the paper off and draw like crazy and he would point at it on queue and it was the funniest thing I've ever seen. It was hysterical.

One of the things that always impresses me with Adam is that you can't seem to tell him a joke that he hasn't already heard. Because he knows where it's going. It could be the most off the wall punch line and he'd be there shaking his head and smiling. You could just see him thinking, go ahead, I know where you're going with this. He's heard him all.

Elliott: When Alan had his surgery...it was called the banjo bypass because he had five...but he had scheduled this Florida workshop that he was going to do with Byron and Jim Hurst. He didn't want to miss out on it so I was his driver for that. Took him around. What was great about it was that we did some house concerts. I helped out by backing him up on the examples he used in his workshops. He would teach the banjo stuff and then say "this is what it would sound like in a song". He and I would play it. It's awfully hard to book the band with the way the economy is but he is more open to us doing more road trips and workshops.

Janice: I have to tell you what a pleasure it has been getting to know him and Kitty...having them right around the corner and to just be able to sit and listen to him.

Elliott: What blows my mind about him is that every break that he takes for a song. They aren't just a bunch of stock licks that he throws together. He works something out for each and every song. It's always really good and always the same. He's amazing.

He's also an amazing guitarist. I was blown away the first time I heard him and Slim Richey go after it. Everybody at Camp Bluegrass was thinking, well, this is swing and they started leaving and I'm sitting there going "hey people, don't leave NOW, the best is yet to come". (the photo at the right is the band 3 Hands High who performed at CTBA's Bill Monroe Tribute event. Pictured are fiddler Mike Montgomery, Jill Jones, Elliott & Janice. Photo by none other than Ken Brown).

Elliott: He came to Albuquerque before I ever knew him, with Wayne. He did a guitar seminar with Wayne. He was over the house playing guitar, using his thumb, downstroke stuff and I told Wayne in kind of a loud, Homer Simpson, whisper, "just think how good he'd be if he used all his fingers" (laughter).



It's always a pleasure watching him totally concentrating on what he is doing. He's there with it. He's totally focused on it and he always throws his best to you. I agree with you. He doesn't toss out anything.

Janice: He's one of the most tasteful banjo players I've ever heard.

Well, I could talk with ya'll forever. I can see its getting darker outside and I may run into deer on Deer Run. Did we miss anything?

Elliott: One of the biggest things that ever happened in my life was joining the Alan Munde Gazette. Right before we moved out here, we were going to move out here anyway, some folks thought we moved out here because I joined the Gazette but we'd already decided. We had already bought our land. At Albuquerque Folk Festival I saw my friend Louis who owned Encore Music at the time and he said "I've got this Collings D1A do you want to look at it?" and I was, "yes, that's what I want". He had it and he hadn't even taken it to the shop yet. He opened it up and it was like (here Elliott makes the sound like angels singing) and I gave him my Martin and a mandolin, a telescope, and a stack of cash and I said, "this is IT, get your hands off it, this is mine baby, nobody else can have it" (laughing). I got that guitar, I joined the Gazette, we moved to Texas, all this stuff happened all at the same time. It was the most amazing thing. I have family and friends that I love dearly, dearly in New Mexico but this is just so nice to be here.

Janice: We did what we needed to do for several years. We took care of family, we took care of all four of our parents, we did all those things and now it's time for us. So now, for the first time in our lives we can go do traveling with music and be able to do those things that we have dreamed of doing forever. I don't regret those responsibilities.

Why couldn't we all been able to do that when we were 22?

Elliott: Exactly!

Thanks Janice, thanks Elliott. See you at Camp Bluegrass.



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Listing of Newsletter “Artist Profiles”, “Meet A Member”, & “Scholarship Recipients”

2010

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

Meet a Member

Thomas Chapmond

Stacy Holt

Barbara & David Brown

Eddie & Pat Zihlman

Ray Cargo

Al James

Tracy Sloan

Rixi Rosenberg

Artist Profile

Danny Barnes

Dan Huckabee

The Carper Family

The Lost Pines

Jeff Robertson

Gerald Jones

Chasing Blue

Jim Hurst

The Upham Family

Chris Hirsch

2011

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

Keith Davis

Gloria Brashaw

Jeff White

Bruce Mansbridge & Elaine Kant

Jerry & Carol Rabun

Doug & Sheryl Sultenfuss

Bryce Koslan

Chuck Middleton

Alan Corlew

Tom Duplissey

Jay Blincoe

The Schuttger Family

David Hamburger

Billy Bright

MilkDrive

Sierra Hull

Tom Ellis

Dennis McDaniel

Rolf & Beate Sieker

Doc Hamilton

Steve Smith

Phil Elliott

James Shelton

Eddie Collins

2012

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

Mike Moore

Duane Calvin

Bob Bourgeois

Mike Stroup

Coleman Stephens

George Rios

Mary Conn

The Lost Pines

Piney Grove Ramblers

Karen Abrahams

Christy & The Plowboys

Earl Scruggs Memorial

In Memory of Doug Dillard

Elliott & Janice Rogers

Scholarship Recipients **2004** - Finn Lynch, **2005** - Christopher Quinters, **2006** - Amy Bell, **2007** - Riley Mathews, Jill Corley, Tyler Colley and Erika Richardson, **2009** - Bethany Rankin and Brett Hawthorne, **2010** - Adam Greer, John Peyton “JP” Shafer, and Devin Paynkewicz, **2011** - Josh, Aaron and Micah Upham & Susannah Armstrong



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If you would like CTBA to review CD's or would like us to include promo material for artists performing in Texas, please send to our email at ctba@centraltexasbluegrass.org or snail mail to the PO Box listed above.

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THE CENTRAL TEXAS BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION WHOSE MISSION IS TO PROMOTE BLUEGRASS MUSIC IN CENTRAL TEXAS.

Our members range from listeners and lovers of bluegrass music to world-class professional musicians who all have the same desire: to promote the music.

CTBA provides a link between clubs, restaurants, and other venues and Central Texas Bluegrass musicians.

CTBA sponsors jams, workshops, provides scholarships to needy musicians, donates to other non-profit organizations, supports radio stations that promote bluegrass music & musicians, and provide festival venues for our listeners and fans of bluegrass music to enjoy. KEEP ON PICKIN'

Support Texas music and get an “Enjoy Texas Music” license plate!

Funds received through your purchase of the “Enjoy Texas Music” license plate will help make grants to benefit music-related educational and community programs sponsored by Texas non-profit organizations (like CTBA!!!).



Randall's Good Neighbor Program

The process to get this started is a bit of a pain, but it makes donating to CTBA, your local schools, or your favorite non-profit organizations very, very easy. Just go to the link below, print the form and fill it out, enter **CTBA's code 9735**, and take to your local Randall's store:

http://shop.safeway.com/corporate/randalls/gn_houston_austin.pdf



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