

On The Road
Special for Hill Country Happenings
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February edition

The first month of 2006 put over 600 extra miles on my car. I thought I was staying home more, enjoying my new dog, Max, and the space around my cabin on the high plain. Guess not. Seems I have transformed into my road warrior mode, and I am now learning to love that time in the car and on the road, often solo. I am also enjoying my new schedule of teaching at Schreiner University. Every semester a new schedule, and I like that.

The highlights of my month are as follows: first, an exciting New Year's Eve at the YO Ranch rocking out with Charlie Robison, discovering the talent of Drew Kennedy and enjoying the heritage of the location. Drew Kennedy hosted Melt Down Monday at the Inn Pub all month, and he visited my creative writing class one Tuesday afternoon. His degree in English and Middle Eastern History served him well as he shared stories and songs with my students. Their assignment was to write him a letter. He and Nathan Hamilton swapped songs on Monday, January 23 at the Inn Pub. Bonnie Bishop was his guest January 30. Diane, bar manager, tells me that Scott Rotge is hosting in February.

I attended KFAN's Windows on Texas as a panelist speaking about archiving music. I noticed I was the only female voice on the panel. Hey, I liked that. I met Carl Dunn, rock and roll photographer par excellence and had the chance to buy his new book of 155 rock and roll photos. A man who has created album covers for Led Zeppelin has many great stories to tell. Andy Wilkinson told of his role with Southwest Collection at Texas Tech, and Roy Ybarra talked about the role of a studio in the archiving process. I discovered that the Sound Design studio is a "best kept" secret in Kerrville. They always have creative projects going, and they took time to offer help with any of the THMF projects. Generosity of spirit moves me, and I find it flowing throughout the Texas music scene.

After a wonderful panel at the Becker Vinyards facility for wine tasting and special parties, we moved on to Hondo's for some authentic country music with Miss Leslie from Houston. Her stage presence, in a fitted brown western suit and fiddle, created a space that took me back in time. And I got to dance a little. I ended the evening at Bonterra listening to a young rock and blues band and talking with Steve Howard about the upcoming Rod Kennedy event on February 14 with Tom Prasada-Rao. For \$75 a person, you can have a spectacular dinner in a gorgeous Hill Country space, music by Tom and a rose for your sweetheart. 830-997-9742

I attended the final concert on Saturday night, hearing Pauline Reese deliver her exquisite brand of honky tonk and Stephen Bruton, three guitars on a stand nearby, singing my new favorite song, "I surrender to the bigger wheel." I even had a chance to dance, one of my favorite activities. Carl took some photos of Pauline and offered to let me use one in my manuscript of women and Texas music. What an honor for me.

Next year I want to be sure I have that third weekend off to participate in all events that KFAN organizes. I missed the Sunday afternoon movie on the life of Billy Joe Shaver, and the concert by John Andrew Parks. I did meet with Parks on the opening night at

the Auslander, as we listened to another discover of mine, a young band called Texas Renegade. Ah, a month of discoveries.

John Andrew, who's song "Planet Texas" is the most often played song on KFAN, also visited two of my classes. He is articulate about what he does and passionate about the music. "I think all music has roots," he explained. "I do not agree with the narrow definition that suggests roots music is somehow more primitive and basic. I use technology, have studio, and enjoy creating music at many levels." His voice, described as operatic, filled my classroom at Schreiner at 10:00 a.m., as he played another KFAN favorite, "The Ghost of Johnny Ringo." John and I went to lunch at a new place, Dos Amigos in Center Point, and cooked up all kinds of music possibilities for the Hill Country. He lives on the top of a mountain in California now. I expect we're going to see more of the Dallas native. Most Texans return.

I received a special invitation to attend the documentary recording of another version of "Viva Terlingua" at Luckenbach. Palo Duro Records chose a new group of Texas musicians to record the familiar songs from this classic album. Gary P. Nunn, Los Gonzos (Bob Livingston, Jon Inmon), Tommy Alverson, and a host of "Texas regulars" were in attendance. Becky Crouch Patterson Borrales, one of Hondo's daughters, not only enjoyed the taping, sharing memories of the first time with me, but also insisted that I dance with her husband, Oscar. And he does a "Mexican" jitterbug that gave me some new exercise!

I missed the second night of recording that included Ray Wylie Hubbard, author of "Red Neck Mother," and Jimmy La Fave.

From Luckenbach I headed to Bandera on Saturday night, January 22, to hear a group new to me, "Mickey and the Motor Cars." My son, Clayton, reminded me, "Mother, they are NOT a new group. I've been listening to them a long time." Carl Dunn told me that the band consisted of two more Braun brothers, the other two playing in Reckless Kelly. That was recommendation enough for me. After an evening with my 4 granddaughters in San Antonio (birthday time), I drove to the Cabaret and joined my sister, Carolyn, as she created a birthday celebration for Rod Kennedy at the Motor Cars concert. I do hope we see more of this group in the Hill Country. They moved to Austin about five years ago and tour across the country, heading out with Willie Nelson last September.

I love the brand of Texas music that showcases a great lead guitar player, an enthusiastic bass player, an explosive drummer, great harmony and voices that sound like someone was gargling with some kind of acid. You know, early Steve Earle stuff. I was not disappointed as Mickey and his brother, Gary, took the stage. I was amused when I noticed the line of fans I had joined, mostly young scantily clad women and young men watching the band intently. I did not fit in the dress code or the age limit! If my former road warrior buddy, Janice, had been with me, we would both have been on that front row. She loves rock and roll as much as I do.

I asked one fan, "What do you like about this band?" He replied, "It's like watching Reckless Kelly start over again. It's the thrill of watching a young group start making their mark on the Texas music scene. I like knowing I'm here at the beginning." I'm not sure we can call this a beginning, and this band sounds quite seasoned to me. I introduced myself as a new fan, offering to do anything I could to help promote them. I want to see them in concert at Schreiner.

I talked with the new owner of this classic Texas dance hall, Matt Franek, and he shared some of his dreams. "I invested everything I have in this place. We have had strictly Western Swing in here, and now we are booking acts that also attract a younger audience. I want to showcase all types of Texas music. And I want to have a songwriter's series here." We stood at the back, talking, and I watched the couples (young) dancing on the wooden floor. Read Geronimo's book on Dance Halls of Texas for more details. Check out www.banderacabaret.com for schedules and photos.

I also had the chance to talk with Hoot Gibson, who shared his story of the ride from Bandera to Calgary, a passionate fire burning in his eyes as he talked. I invited him to take part in the September THMF Living History Weekend. And I hope to get him into schools with this story.

The local Kerrville scene provides many opportunities to hear Texas music. The Riverstone Cafe, formerly the Yacht Club, has music on Saturday nights. And the meal I had at the adjoining restaurant with buffalo on my salad was delicious!

The Weatherford Jackson Band kicks off the month. This local band has a beautifully designed CD filled with interesting and eclectic music. Their live show is even better. :

Jimmy Perkins, now managing Drew and Charlie Robison, has started a record label called Sustain, a dream he's been carrying around with him. Jimmy told me that Bandera, Adolf Hofner and Arkey Blue were dominant influences in his musical life. He also feels that Doug Sahm stands for all that he loves about Texas music. After shepherding Pat Green to his leading spot, Jimmy has now turned his attention to the new label, Wade Bowen being the first release in February. Bruce Robison and Ray Wylie Hubbard follow, with Drew Kennedy adding to the roster. Based in Kerrville, 823 Management and Sustain Records bring a new professional edge to the Hill Country music scene.

A bit about Wade Bowen who's first release on Sustain is scheduled for February 21. "Lost Hotel" will be Bowen's first studio release since 2002's "Try Not to Listen." The first release "God Bless This Town," "stems from the frustration of rumors and how easily they are thrown around," Bowen says. The music I've heard on this CD shows influences from Aerosmith to Zeppelin. Described as roots, rock, guy rock, alt-country, and Texas music, the songs will play well on the radio. He started playing music while a student at Texas Tech in 1998. I do like the rock edge on Texas music.

Check out www.Hill-country-visitor.com for a complete events calendar of the Hill Country. You can still purchase tickets for the Golden Dragon Chinese Acrobats at the Cailloux Performing Arts Center in Kerrville. Call 896-9393. And pay special attention to the events listed here in HCH! Texas Music Coffeehouse Series features Willie Jaye on Feb. 1, Carolyn Wonderland and El-Saleh on March 1, Will Owen Gage, Jay Boy Adams and Josh Murley Band on March 31 and spoken word on April 5. And now I'm "down the road."