

On The Road for December 2007

By Kathleen Hudson

December 1, John Christopher Way will be featured at an afternoon fundraiser for Big Brothers, Big Sisters in the pavilion at Louise Hays Park from noon-6 p.m. Food and drink available. Join us for some country music, some dance music, some great fiddle music and more. I have his new CD, and it's a good one!

Turk, owner of Gazelle Computers, business partner with the Back Porch Cantina, owner of Gazelle Recording Studio and musician, spoke to my technical communication class at Schreiner University one morning in November. I knew of his prowess as a musician; I did not know of his prowess in the classroom. Turk shared his story (seven years in this country), gave some good examples of the importance of communication, and reminded students to "sell yourself" in a job interview. His recurring theme is found in the word "opportunity."

Turk, having once looked in from the outside, knows that hard work and looking for opportunities will create success. And he is not afraid of hard work. His recording studio is stellar, his music (often late into the early morning hours) is entertaining and interesting; his energy is boundless. I'm glad Kerrville has Turk in the music family. He hosts a weekly jam on Wednesday night at the Back Porch, and showcases local musicians. Dale Mayfield his hosting a songwriters circle and music jam at Luckenbach on Tuesday nights. Abby, at Luckenbach, is bringing in women to showcase there on the first Thursday of the month, Woodstove Acoustic Series. The town is also full of house concerts, with Robert Hardy beginning a series in Boerne on December 1, showcasing Brennen Leigh, the THMF performer at the September coffeehouse. Ah, everything connects. Thanks E.M. Forester.

Friday, November 16, I headed to John T. Floore Country Store. I was last there a month ago at a classic Willie show. On this cool Friday, I set up to see my books as I listened to a favorite of mine for many years, James McMurtry. He recently told me that "fame comes quickly and quickly disappears," as I congratulated him on his awards this last year. "I'm looking for a label for this next album I just finished," he said, sardonically as only James can speak. Slow and steady.

I loved his songs and his music the first time I heard him at an interview in San Antonio. He became an important chapter in my first book, a collection of interviews with Texas songwriters, and his dad, Larry McMurtry, graciously agreed to an interview so I could also have his perspective. That was before the Pulitzer Prize. Yes, the writing gene runs deep in this family. "Too Long In The Wasteland," a title of an early McMurtry song, rings true when you see the porch on the family home outside Archer City where James penned the song. I thought I did see bullet holes in the mailbox!

James McMurtry did not disappoint me or the packed house at John T. Floore Country Stores in Helotes on November 16. I first heard James years ago when he had completed about five songs. Now many albums and awards later, he just keeps turning up the metaphoric volume...and the literal volume. This powerhouse trio including Ronnie Johnson and Darren Hess will rock any house. Then James gets his big acoustic guitar to do some songs, reminding us that the words do come first with this McMurtry man. As with dad. Yes, James may or may not like the reference, but I do know that both the McMurtry writers, father and son, respect each other. I have interviews with both in my first book on Texas songwriters. Tim Holt left the sound board and joined the trio for the last few songs, adding another lead, electric guitar to the mix. Real rock.

I had to get up and dance to "Chocktaw Bingo," and found out later my dance partner for that song, Tim, also played bass with Blaze Foley, another chapter in that first book. My road warrior companion, Dave Mulry, hails from across the sea in England, and now teaches in the English Department at Schreiner University. He might not have known the ride he was in for when he said YES to my request for a companion on the road. We had a great visit with James in the green room before the show. James may show up as serious in all photos, but his humor kept us

laughing outloud. His description of a “virtual” concert hosted by one of the Monkee’s, Mike Nesbitt, in California created loud laughter in us both as he described the computer antics of “avatar-like” characters that represented audience members. “When they danced, all characters became pink flamingos flying across a screen that we could see,” he said, slowly. James always speaks slowly with great wisdom. Yes, you can tell, I’ve been a fan for a long time, and it doesn’t get much better than a James McMurtry and The Heartless Bastards concert. He has a new album coming out this spring, Watch for it.

And now a report on THMF office: We have put up a flyer asking for a new team member, someone who wants to volunteer and help run the THMF. Yes, a teammate for Kathleen. Estimated time at ten hours/week. We still have a wonderful office staff of Jeremiah, part-time office manager, Prari and Sam, work/study assistants funded by Schreiner, Paula Reynolds, Bard Project coordinator, and Herb Arbuckle, volunteer research associate. Janice Kennemer, board member, manages the scholarship committee and Jack Fields and Paula Reynolds both produce house concerts in Kerrville. Lex Gillespie produced a Rockabilly Radio Series, “Whole Lotta Shakin.” My, we are a busy group.

The November 7 coffeehouse featured Walk Wilkins, Bill Small, and Johnny “Gringo” Greenburg, Los Mystiquitos, according to Walt. The small version of Los Mystiqueros. He began with one of my favorite lines in all songwriting, “Here’s to some trains I’ve missed.” And we heard Bill sing another favorite of mine, “Diamonds in the Sun.” This trio harmonized, rocked, jammed out and created a beautiful finale to the 2007 20th anniversary season for THMF. Mark these dates for spring: first Wed. in Feb., second Wed. in March (with Terri Hendrix and Lloyd Maines), and first Wed. in April. A change in March to accommodate the full schedule of Terri and Lloyd. Women’s History Month.

The Rockabilly Project, headed up by Lex Gillespie of Washington, D.C., is now airing around the country. Rosie Flores is the emcee, and the shows are soulful, interesting and entertaining. See the THMF website for details.

The membership drive is in full force! Consider joining as the anniversary year comes to a close. We still need a volunteer membership chairman! You can donate as little as the basic \$20 and be a member, supporting a list of educational and entertaining projects. We have a special band membership for \$50 that included free listing on our website. Herb Arbuckle helped us create a lifetime membership of \$500 which is honored with a special pen. Recently the Jackson Family Foundation in Ft. Worth donated \$1,000 to help with operation expenses. Thanks, Mary Kathryn. She has known me since I was about 10 living at 3315 Rogers Street in Ft. Worth. Sister Carolyn became a \$100 patron, thus helping to keep the office running! Join our family now. Any donations are tax deductible and the end of the year is fast approaching. Mail to PO Box 291945, Kerrville, Texas, 78029-1945.

2007 put over \$3,000 in the Wayne Kennemer Scholarship fund, donations honoring Bobby Rector and Terry and Sarah Penney. Thanks. You know who you are!

Barbara Kooyman and her new organization, Texamericana, are under our non-profit umbrella, along with the Rockabilly series, “Whole Lotta Shakin.” Harold Eggers has several projects called the Townes Van Zandt project under our umbrella.

Ahead in the dreaming stage: Gospel music with Willie and Bobbie Nelson; classroom visit in children’s literature with Susie Nelson; a songwriters seminar in September as part of the Living History Day/weekend; a new course at Schreiner on Texas songwriting; a possible Songwriters Chair at Schreiner University; more Bard Project.

Possible Christmas gifts from my imagination include any of the music books from the UT Press catalogue: **Texas Troubadors** by Steve Harris is a collection of intimate black and white photos of Texas troubadors, including a handwritten comment that speaks to their love and commitment, a stunning work of art; **Bonfire of Roadmaps**, a book of road poetry by Joe Ely in the spirit of Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac; **Honky Tonk Hero**, the autobiography of Billy Joe Shaver. These three books make up a portion of the stable of writers talking about Texas music with UT

Press. And they also have a new Leonard Cohen release, **Various Positions**. I love being part of this group with my two oral history books on Texas songwriters and Texas women. Guess I might just list my new book, *Women in Texas Music: Stories and Songs*, as a possible gift item. Any Cormac McCarthy book, including his most recent one, **The Road**, which is another tale of a journey which is stunning in stark details, both horrific and beatific. All at the same time. McCarthy's **No Country For Old Men** is currently out in film version, gathering promises of awards and recognition at first jump out of the gates on November 16.

CD's for gifts include "Autobiography," the first recording featuring Bobbie Nelson on piano on Justice Records (Houston); Ruthie Foster (any of her CD's); "Home," by The Dixie Chicks (produced by Lloyd Maines); Susan Gibson (writer of "Wide Open Spaces for the Chicks"); the new Rounder Record CD, a compilation of Christmas songs by roots and folk artists; any Townes Van Zandt CD; Texana Dames family compilations, the new Terri Henrix CD, "The Spiritual Kind"; all Leonard Cohen music, including the new tribute album and DVD, "I'm Your Man; all James McMurtry music; Josh Grider, "Million Miles To Go"(Bard Project participant who spoke to English classes at Tivy High School on November 16); Billy Joe Shaver, "Storyteller," on Sugar Hill Records; Rodney Hayden's new CD, "Down The Road," (real country); "Living Simple," the new CD by John Christopher Way (Wayne Kennemer Scholarship recipient) that brings country music back to the country; Dale Mayfield, "Back In The Normal," CD of ten original songs (don't miss his Tuesday night jams at Luckenbach); Wayne Dyer CD's; Deepak Chopra CD's; Bob Dylan material (of course!) and on and on. Hey, seven planets were in Libra the time I was born. That accounts for lots of indecision and balancing!

From my literary life, we can't forget Rumi, Joseph Campbell, Camille Paglia, Adrienne Rich, Joy Harjo, Sandra Cisneros (who gave me Max, the black dog), Rimbaud, Denise Chavez, Louise Erdrich (all in my American ethnic literature class), Carl Jung, James Hillman, Paula Underwood (The Walking People and Who Speaks For Wolf), more Leonard Cohen (Stranger Music), Scott Momaday, Leslie Silko and on and on. Join me in my women's literature class at Schreiner next semester, or children's literature! And Fall 2008 I will teach *Texas Music: Stories and Songs*, a new class at Schreiner University. You heard it first here! Founder of this site, Jim Leavell, is speaking to my technical communication class on Monday, December 3. They have reviewed the website and will be giving him a report! Ah, I love the way the threads of my life weave together. Sometimes on their own.

Il's Sont Partis and down the road. KH