

On The Road

June 2007

By Kathleen Hudson

In June our hearts in the Texas Hill Country turn to thoughts of music.....the 36th Annual Kerrville Folk Festival is the happening place until June 10. Located at Quiet Valley Ranch, about 10 miles south of Kerrville on Highway 16, this plot of land transforms each year into a haven for music lovers, nature lovers, and lovers of all things kind and beautiful! At least, that has been my impression the 35 years I've attended. Now the proud owner of lifetime tickets that I purchased during the 70's, I not only attend but invite friends to have the experience, still new to many Hill Country residents. Seems we don't always appreciate what's in our backyard!

As I've traveled the world, I hear, over and over, "Oh, do you go to Kerrville?" Using this expressions as a generic way to ask about the music. Kerrville is synonymous with music the world over! Home to a renown songwriters event called The New Folk Contest, home of The Ballad Tree, home of a large volunteer force, this festival, now produced by Dalis Allen, brings music from around the world and fans from around the world together.....sometimes under a cloudy sky, sometimes in a rainstorm, and sometimes under a bright moon.

Saturday, May 26, after a rainy start on May 24, I watched the clouds roll back for the moon as Peter Yarrow took the stage for his annual birthday party! We heard an impassioned set from this man who "Has been to jail for justice," and we heard his plea to honor all people. Peter delivers the Steve Seskin song, "Don't Laugh At Me," as if he wrote the song from an experience in his own life. The power of the song. This was not a step "back" into some idealistic era when Peter, Paul and Mary reigned, rather a statement about the world NOW.

Everyone was thrilled when the expected happened, Peter asked the kids to join him as he sang "Puff The Magic Dragon." Lots of happy parents up front with cameras capturing this moment. I knew my three kids were well rehearsed in this song. After all, I raised them at this festival. Jessica, my 14 year old granddaughter, now living with me, turned to me, surprised, saying, "I know the title, but I don't know this song." I just didn't get my hands on her soon enough! Time to teach her the value of childhood memories and playthings. We don't want Puff to slip out of our lives!

The moon kept shining down as Jimmy LaFave took the stage. Sister Carolyn and Rod Kennedy (founder an former producer of the KFF) asked Jimmy to come to Kerrville October 2, 2005, for my 60th birthday. Now that was a surprise to me. Jimmy, his lyrics and his performance, has always been in my list of "favorites." I love his passion; I love his edge. This Saturday night \his "band" consisted of two hot lead guitarists....Andrew Hardin and Jon Inmon...along with a wildman from Croatia on keyboard, Radoslav.

When I told Radoslav that he appeared to be dancing with his keyboard as well as his accordion, he smiled a wide grin, saying, "Of course, I come from a family of dancers. My sister is a choreographer in New York. That's where I met Jimmy."

As he leaned over the keyboard, elbows high in the air, he seems to be taking the music out of the instrument and weaving it throughout the air around him. His leads on the

beautiful dark wooden piano on stage got everyone dancing. And the expression on his face brought a new level of bliss to the performance.

I could describe each one in those terms....level of bliss. Andrew Hardin is a master guitarist, often on the road with storyteller Tom Russell. Both he and Jon, another guitar wizard, both carry a pure and humble attitude with them at all times. Do they really know how great they are? Do they even care? I see them and have seen them play their hearts out, putting all ego aside. They deliver soul.

Jimmy delivers Dylan songs in such an inimitable way that you no longer hear Dylan, rather you hear Jimmy saying these beautiful words. Nuances that belong only to Jimmie LaFave. He once visited my mythology class at Schreiner University, and his classroom demeanor matches his way of being on stage. Brilliant!

Guess you can tell I had a great time Saturday night. And both performances are for sale through the KFF website. I'm sure. I bought mine the next day. Now I can replay the shows in my car as I drive up and down I-10 to my house.

From Nashville to California to Maine to Austin (on June 1), the eclectic show brings this area more great music than you can find anywhere else. Saturday night, June 2, Terri Hendrix (a favorite with Kerrville locals) and Judy Collins share the evening bill. I first heard "Suzanne" one summer in Canada with Judy Collins sweetly singing that poignant song about loving an eccentric woman. Research revealed the writer, now my favorite, Leonard Cohen. And he's from Montreal.

I was teaching horsebackriding at Camp White Pine, in Haliburton, north of Toronto. I tried to learn "Suzanne" on the guitar, my fingers never playing Bmin well. Then I heard Leonard sing the song, adding the drama of his voice quality. Check out these words, "Suzanne takes you down to her place by the river. She feeds you tea and oranges that come all the way from China. Just when you mean to tell her that you have no love to give her, she gets you on her wavelength and lets the river answer that you've always been her lover. And you want to travel with her. And you want to travel blind. And you think that you can trust her for she's touched your perfect body with her mind." Yep, that's my favorite.

As I write, travel, and teach, I notice that the songs I have heard and the stories that come my way have an influence on the quality of my life. I would love to hear from some of you, dear readers. What stories have led you through life? Soon, very soon, I can also be reached at www.kathleenhudson.net Meanwhile, contact me through the music office at kat@maverickbbs.com

I ran into Javier, a Gypsy guitarist I've known in San Miguel for years. He not only played for my group (in my apartment), but he also shared his soul with us. He told us to follow our hearts, express our love, share ourselves with others. My plan is to bring Javier to Kerrville and present his music as a part of our Texas heritage. Maybe a house concert? Maybe a show at Schreiner? Is Kerrville ready for some Gypsy music? Javier and I both love the poetry of Lorca, and we might have to do the show at "five in the afternoon." A Lorca reference I love.

School's out. Two weeks in San Miguel de Allende is behind me. What's ahead? Well, the Texas Heritage Music Foundation is spending the summer planning out Living History Day, September 28, and our first coffeeshouse, September 5. My second book comes out with University of Texas Press in September, and I'll also be teaching a new

course at Schreiner on Ethnic Literature. Nuff said. Second book is **WOMEN IN TEXAS MUSIC: STORIES AND SONGS**. Another oral history.

Two great students in the THMF office now. Stephanie Gaines, English honors graduate, and Jeremiah Persons, business intern. Sandra Langley helps out one a week and amongst us we have THE team. Volunteers, sponsors, vendors, performers always welcome! See www.texasheritagemusic.org for more details. Consider joining us in some way! The great-grandsons of Jimmie Rodgers, Austin and Cody, are planning on attending. We'll have a noon tribute to the Father of Country Music, along with about 50 other performers and demonstrations throughout the day. The Texas Folklore Society will help us present a panel from 4-6, and Duke Davis will bring us a Western show on the history of the cowboy in song during the evening. Price of a meal gets you the show!

The THMF is not going to be able to bring the Jimmie Rodgers stage production to town this year. Planning for the future. It's a great show. Nolan Porterfield's classic book, **Jimmie Rodgers: The Life and Times of America's Blue Yodeler**, is being re-released by University of Mississippi Press. This book is the definitive story of the Father of Country Music, well-researched and well-documented. Porterfield's other books include **Last Cavalier: The Life and times of John A. Lomax** (another Hudson hero) and an award-winning novel, **A Way of Knowing**. Nolan has been in Kerrville for the September show in the past, lending his guidance and knowledge.

THMF did receive a \$15,000 grant from NEA to support a rockabilly radio series produced by Lex Gillespie. We also received a grant from the Texas Humanities Commission for this project. Rosie Flores, a songwriter and rockabilly performer originally from San Antonio and a chapter in my upcoming book, has been chosen as host for the series. My book with University

I want to end with a poem that has guided me through life. Any Texas songwriters putting Rumi to music? I know Deepak Chopra has done this. Rumi says, and I agree:

This being human is a guest house,
every morning a new arrival.
a joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
welcome and entertain them all!
even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably,
he may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
the dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.
be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.
Happy Trails and ils sont partis. KH