

## ***On The Road*** ***January 2008***

*By Dr. Kathleen Hudson*

Many of the gifts I received during this Christmas season were gifts of love. Music is one way we can express love, and my ongoing research into the many aspects of Texas music reveals people who are also filled with love. As I plan a course on Texas music for Fall 2008 at Schreiner University, the people who produce the music will be central to our study. Let's take one evening, December 29, at the Auslander in Fredericksburg. The featured artists were Walt Wilkins y los Mystigueros with a local duo, Shannie, opening up. It was a cold evening so the heaters were on and the plastic flaps down to keep to keep this patio venue warm. The music warmed our spirits.

After the duo performed, I was introduced to them by Abbey, the beautiful and talented woman who now books Luckenbach. Abbey also told me to come out to the First Ever Blues Concert at Luckenbach on January 26 featuring WC Clark, and she told me of a Women's Music Festival she is planning for early August. She told me these things with her spirit shining bright out of her eyes. Many circled around her to be in the presence of this joy of spirit.

My talk with Shan and Annie gave me another opportunity to be in the presence of love. "We met at Luckenbach," Annie said, smiling warmly. I was singing, and Shan sat down and asked if he could accompany me on guitar. That was the beginning of our work together, and, "she looked straight into my eyes, "the beginning of this love affair." Shan joined in, agreeing that their love was present in the music they create together as well as the life they live together. The audience loved them.

I took home a CD, listening carefully to each song as a story created by two people in love. Her clear voice, their harmony, their songs create a testament to the power of love. "Water Over Stones" is the title cut on the album, and it documents the way we can overcome obstacles in love.

Walt Wilkins has become the favorite of the Hill Country, playing all the local venues. Mike Blakely showed up at the Auslander to hear his buddies and invited us all to his regular Tuesday night gig in Marble Falls, January 8, when Terri Hendrix and Lloyd Maines will perform at River City Grill. The room was full of music makers and music lovers. Walt, donned in a Mexican poncho, led his group of 4 guitarists and one drummer through a set of almost classics. His performances bring out crowds who know the songs and love the band. We all feel like Walt and his stunning band just might be playing in our living room one day. At the end of the show, Bill Worrell got up to sing "El Paso," with the band. Another example of the inclusive nature of each Mystiquero performance.

Los Mystiqueros includes the talent of Johnny Greenberg, who also produced the Shannie CD, Bill Small, who also played on the Shannie CD, Marcus Eldridge, another amazing guitarist, and Ray Rodriguez on drums, who burns that incense throughout the set from his drum stand. I've also seen Bill and Johnny with Sam Baker, another songwriter in this family of talent.

I can't say enough good about this band, Los Mystiqueros. Rod Kennedy called them the "Texas Eagles," and I think he is dead on with that comparison. Harmony, talent, songwriting, and performance ability blend to give us a show that can ease us with ballads and rock us to our feet as any one of the guitarists takes a lead. Their latest album,

“Diamonds In The Sun,” on Palo Duro Records, showcases the writing and vocal performance of all band members, not just Walt. “Trains I Missed” is still my favorite song, penned Walt, Nicole Witt, and Gilles Godard. It conveys a Zen sensibility that all the events of our lives are significant in that they are part of NOW. I love that sensibility, the power of now.

I also had a chance to hear Walt, along with Jay Boy Adams, Hal Ketchum, Tina Wilkins and others at the annual Christmas party in Art, Texas, held at the home and studio of Bill Worrell. I had heard his name for years as someone who creates magnificent art and loves music. This was my chance to meet Bill, experience his own passion for the creative process in all its forms, and honor the heartfelt music of Texas. Seems Bill is also part of this creative family of musicians, and his CD, “Carpe Every Diem,” is a collection of songs from his heart.

After I finished the CD, I called him to ask, “Now who is the woman who inspired that song? When did you move to New Mexico? We seem to share a great love for the desert.” In fact, I felt I had heard his own story about life as I listened to this collection of songs. We call that way of writing “authentic voice.” A characteristic of Texas music when you compare it to the Nashville writing scene. My favorite song after listening for many miles down Texas roads is “Let There Be Love.” I later found out that Bill, also, calls this a favorite. Jesse Colter sings on the album, along with guest appearances of Walt and Tina Wilkins and Jay Boy Adams. I heard that Bill was once scout master for Jay Boy. Ah, these family stories abound in the Texas music scene.

Bill’s art captures the spirit of the Shamanic images located in caves in the Lower Pecos Canyon and in Del Rio at the White Shaman Preserve. Many of the people at the party were wearing his art around their neck. See [www.billworrell.com](http://www.billworrell.com) for more information on this talented treasure in the Texas music/art scene. And I don’t use the word TEXAS to create limits, rather to show a connection.

Bill is currently writing his own feelings about Texas for a book, and his own book, JOURNEYS THROUGH THE WINDS OF TIME, is a collection of his written and artistic response to life, each piece in the book dated and fixed in space with a time and place. Reading the book, listening to his music, looking at his art, all provide a journey through the heart and mind of Bill Worrell. I was pleased to also find out he has spend years in the classroom and knows the thrill of teaching, the art that dominates my life. I know Walt went out Bill’s for his birthday celebration on December 30, before another evening at the Auslander, and I heard Bill invite Mike Blakely to come out early, “So we can ride a mule out and view the land.”

CD’s that arrived at the THMF office include one by Hoot Gibson produced by Larry Nolen. Hoot co-authored a book telling the story of a trail ride he lead across the country, and he shares his stories, music and poetry with many a crowd across Texas. “Of Horses and Mules and Men” is a collection of his poetry as performed by Hoot. Bandera is home to a creative scene that includes the music of the Almost Patsy Cline Band, the poetry of many a cowboy, gatherings at the guest ranches in the area, and rodeo, of course, in The Cowboy Capitol of the World. Yes, the Hill Country is rich with creative self-expression!

I also saw the Bob Dylan film “I’m Not There” twice over the holiday season. His life and art has inspired many a Texas musician, most recently giving Elana “Fremerman” James the opportunity to tour with Bob and Willie several years ago. I have also heard the story of how Bob Dylan called the home of Townes Van Zandt to ask about doing

some writing together. Townes never got the message. I heard Bob say, once on stage in Austin, that he was going to sing "Pancho and Lefty," a great song by a great Texas songwriter. And we know Kinky Friedman toured with him on the Rolling Thunder Review. Ah, the stories they must have about this man who has been a big influence in my life since I first heard him as a freshman in college at TCU in 1963. I used the new DVD release on his performances at Newport Folk Festival as a finale to my writing class at Schreiner, reminding the students of the power of language. I highly recommend seeing this film, a collage of many of the ways we see and hear Bob Dylan and his stories. I am now rereading CHRONICLES, his autobiography, enjoying the words he uses to describe his life. Reading this makes me think of Bill Worrell, the Texas musicians I know and love, and all the brave people willing to express their hearts.....the only thing worth doing in life!

John Andrew Parks has moved from California to Fredericksburg. I first met him at the Windows Over Texas January show produced by KFAN radio. Now he's become a local performer, adding to the creative story of the Texas Hill Country. Dallas was once home to him. He will start a songwriter's night at the Friendly Fire Bistro in Johnson City on Thursday nights. Jan. 3 is the first night. He will also appear at Hondo's in Fredericksburg on January 7. January 13 he is part of the songwriter's circle for KFAN Windows On Texas. His fame might rest in his hit song, "Planet, Texas," but his talent goes way beyond one song. He was commissioned to write music for a program in China, and he can articulate the creative process in any situation. I am pleased to have him as a guest in my classroom from time to time. His goals for the Thursday night gig are to showcase the writing and provide a listening spot for good audiences!

The Back Porch Cantina in Kerrville is also working on a room to showcase music, and they have a MySpace page. The week includes open mike night, jam nights, and feature nights. I know Back Porch Mary will be playing there January 26. They rock out and interpret the songs of Guy Clark, Billy Joe Shaver and even Townes Van Zandt in unique ways.....Back Porch Mary ways! Nothing like a hot trio with a stand-up bass guitar.

Ahead is Windows On Texas, January 10-13. Check out the KFAN website for details. Support live music. Attend the new songwriters showcase in Johnson City on Thursdays. Head to Marble Falls on Tuesdays. The THMF coffeehouse series at Schreiner University begins again on February 6 with Clifton Fifer and a Tribute to Black Heritage Month. LZ Love has been invited to come share her music with us. Check her out on the web! A strong and beautiful woman who can sing the blues. March 12 Terri Hendrix and Lloyd Maines will help celebrate Women's History Month, and Thom "The World" Poet returns for the April spoken word coffeehouse. Well...guess we just can't stay home when we live in the Texas Hill Country. Carpe Every Diem....ils sont partis.....abrazos...happy trails. KH

Book review by Hudson

Joe Ely, BONFIRE OF ROADMAPS, University of Texas Press

Bonfire of Roadmaps by Joe Ely, published by University of Texas Press, 2007, is a road trip without a road map. Joe Ely, using excerpts from his journals on the road, structures his memories in quatrains, using the ballad method to tell his story. The accompanying CD gives the reader a chance to experience the oral history contained in collection of

memories, listening to the bard tell his tales. In the spirit of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, Ely not only captures his observations in poignant detail, but he also reports on the wars, the politics, the history and the mythology of our culture. I found myself looking to the end of each chapter, curious about the dates being documented. His allusions to literature, art, philosophy and politics sparked a curiosity in this reader that left me wanting to experience the road. Joe Ely, the ultimate hero in Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, had to leave home in order to find home. He had to leave and return, over and over. Each leaving became another opportunity for Ely to weave together a web of meaning.

He says, "I look into the eyes of the audience in the dark/And I see a longing for emotional fulfillment/Not to be confused with intellectual awareness, Like concepts, which turn good men into critics"( 135). He says, "The road will balance tomorrow"(142). And he says, "These are the moments we live for/All else is just Highway and Howdy do"(152). Symbols repeat themselves as he documents his journey through life. Roads, highways, wind, trucks and the womb populate his verse. After all, Kerouac talks of life "from the womb to the tomb."

Like Whitman, like Ginsberg, Ely talks to the people, telling them what his eyes have witnessed. He speaks of his beliefs about life, death, love and spirit. And the road goes on, as does his story. Each tour brings with it new memories, documented in poetic style with the structure changing at times to match the new content.

Reading this book is like sitting beside Joe Ely as he heads out on another adventure. We hear the dread in his voice upon leaving, even as we hear a consistent reference to Sharon and Maria, the girls he leaves behind.

I have been in places where Joe has traveled and played. I was out in that audience he describes. And I love reading this book and finding out more. Reading this book is a journey through American poetry written by the bard who also sings his story.