

## ON THE ROAD

JULY 2008

*By Dr. Kathleen Hudson*

I spent 3 days in the Big Apple to receive a Peabody Award for the Texas Heritage Music Foundation. Several years ago Lex Gillespie from Washington D.C. called me about being the sponsor of this rockabilly radio series. He raised the money for the series, conducted the interviews and produced this heartfelt series called “Whole Lotta Shakin,;” with Rosie Flores (a recommendation I made after including my interview with her in my book on the women of Texas music) as the voice of the series. I am honored and thrilled to be part of a series with this much soul. And I called Lex after hearing the Johnny Cash show to tell him this! Yes, I served as a research assistant but Lex created the series. Ironically, I created a radio series myself on Texas music before even starting this foundation in 1987. I learned the hard way about sponsorship, ad agencies, syndication and studio work. A good learning it was though, leading me to understand this project with Lex. My board agreed, and we said an immediate yes to this sponsorship. The show is running on 90.1 FM each Saturday night during June and July on Texas Public Radio in the Hill Country.

What a time I had at the Chelsea Hotel (thanks to Leonard Cohen and his life!). Room 619 had a balcony that looked out over 23rd Street, right next to the sign for the hotel. And all the descriptions do not convey the sense of literary awe that permeated me as I stood in the lobby for the first time. Knowing the history and the stories only whet my appetite; meeting the man who writes a daily blog on the hotel, Ed Hamilton, added new interest. But my slow approach to my room, painted dark forest green with black furniture, gave me time to soak in the art that adorns every space of the wall. Of course, a dark blue/green painting of a spiral was closest to my doorway! Yep, that spiral keeps showing up in my life as well as on my arm!

“I remember that night at the Chelsea Hotel” kept Leonard’s voice in my head even as I thought about Janis, Dylan, Patti Smith, Mark Twain, Thomas Wolfe, Arthur C. Clarke (He wrote 2001 Space Odyssey there!), and, of course, the death of Dyan Thomas in that hotel! Whew...the ghosts that roam these halls. And I loved meeting the three women (moira?) who sat in the lobby talking each day. Merle has lived in the hotel for 27 years. Storm also has a room there as well as one in London. And Irene comes over from an apartment across the street to complete these trio...the three fates in my imagination.

Great service, wonderful people, good memories. I shall return for weekends at the Chelsea Hotel. I also spent a day walking in Greenwich Village, taking photos of Café Wha and more. Avi Colon, in a pink linen shirt, was playing guitar in Washington Square. We talked, I was given two beautiful songs for the day, and we walked. Avi had all the stories of a man well-traveled. We also saw David Amram walking down the street! I had just read Kerouac on stage with Amram at the Kerrville Folk Festival. And now this chance meeting. I also took a list up to Jeff Rosen’s office, Bob Dylan’s publisher. The list was clear, saying, “These are some ways I see possible collaboration with Bob Dylan and the Texas Heritage Music Foundation.” He did not have time to meet with me. The list includes a film on Mance Lipscomb, a tribute to Jimmie Rodgers, an introduction to my next book on the poetry of Texas music, and a request that he visit Kerrville! Well, can’t hurt to ask.

I also had the chance to attend a concert by Dr. John. I had been spending time with Rev. Goat Carson when he stayed with Kinky in Medina, listening to the poetry of Rev. Goat! Well, four of his songs are on the new Dr. John album, along with a duet with Willie Nelson. What a night of connections as I stood at the Highline Ballroom a few blocks from my hotel. What icing on the cake of my great trip. Yes, I danced all night with CC, a poet from Seattle who also loved the music. And I heard the very political songs generated by a post-Katrina atmosphere in New Orleans. "Promises, Promises," may say it all! Of course, "Dream Warrior," by Rev. Goat, may be my favorite! Goat has been a guest in my Schreiner English classes for several years, and he participates in the annual Living History Day produced by the Texas Heritage Music Foundation the last Friday in September, Sept. 26, 2008! Goat is working on a new book of poetry (I do like the title "Medicine Poem," but think he is working with Kinky on a new title.). And he has out a new work of fiction. *Shallow Graves*. Eeries and mysterious! Find all this on the web, of course!

Join us in September in Kerrville on the campus of Schreiner University. Free with over 70 performers sharing stories and songs. And a noon tribute to Jimmie Rodgers.

Speaking of San Antonio, Jim Beal and Tracey Nelson (music and travel editors) both have very interesting blogs on the San Antonio Express News website where they give us lots more information than just the column in the newspaper. Tracey visited the Kerrville Folk Festival the night Peter Yarrow and Paul Stookey played. Jim knows the music scene inside and out, reminding me when I was raving about Marcus Rubio that he had known of this kid for over 5 years, watching him grow and develop from age thirteen on. OK, I was a little late on the scene discovering him when he turned 19! He did give us the most creative interpretation of Bob Dylan that I've ever seen, with three horns backing him as he played keyboard and violin. His current band is called Band of Pillows. The Dylan birthday bash was held at Casbeer's in San Antonio, and I also discovered Michael Martin, a dramatic man who interprets music using the minor keys and darkness that I love! Both of these discoveries had Leonard Cohen connections as well, Leonard being one of my favorites since I was 19 and discovered him in Canada as I taught horsebackriding at a Jewish camp north of Toronto. Leonard is from Montreal.

Marcus was shocked to share this love with me, since he had been listening to Leonard since he was about 12! And Michael gave me his new cd, "Fatal Flower Garden," saying, "Leonard Cohen's band played on this, and I worked with his producer." I knew it when I heard it! "Blood Red Roses" might be my favorite song on the album, but the others are quickly working their way into my longterm memory. The words are pure poetry and "clown of god" works well as a poem written on the back with a clown in white followed by a skeleton. "I feel like the clown of god, wound up tight and unraveling/I'm burning down the big top-cut me from the simple I'm strangling in/I died the death and I have found I'm not so high above the ground/the dead that live in my home town, the local fools who dance to any sound/they're all smoke to me now." Not sure why I like that dark stuff since my life is so full of light. Hm....must speculate on that as I write on the poetry of Texas music that moves me in *sangre y huesos*. He says, "Still I hang out, burning from the inside out."

Two new discoveries on one night! Closer to home, each Thursday night the Back Porch Cantina becomes the happening place for musicians to meet and jam. Expect a variety of songs and instruments and an evening hosted by Turk, guitar slinger, computer guru (Gazelle Computers), and great spokesperson on international communication in business in my technical communications

class at Schreiner University. One owner, Diane, can always be seen greeting the guests and sharing her own love for the music. Featured bands on the weekends and karaoke sometimes on Wednesday.

My own experience of the Kerrville Folk Festival included a night when David Amram invited me to read the last paragraph of *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac while he played piano. And he played with Jack onstage and in coffeehouses for 12 years! Charlie Spirit Walker Allison was also invited up to join in on drums on another Jack favorite, "Pull My Daisy," the theme song from a film that Kerouac (and Amram) created. Yes, David Amram is one of the most creative and self-expressed people I have ever met. His love of life, art, literature and experience enrich his own life and the lives of those who meet him. He has a new book out to complement the other two. *Vibrations, Offbeat, and now Upbeat: Nine Lives of a Musician Cat*, published in October 07...the same time as my book on the women of Texas music.

Connections abound as I headed to Book People in Austin for a booksigning on June 11. My friend Buck invited me to the Jack Kerouac exhibit at the Harry Ransom Center on the UT campus. The "scroll" manuscript of the book had moved on, but the letters, postcards, art, books and film related to the Beat Generation were still on display. There we saw "Pull My Daisy" with Amram listed as musical director. I finished the exhibit realizing that my summer of travel is taking me to New York City (Jack was there!), then San Francisco (City Lights, Vesuvio Bar, coffeehouse scene, Jack was there) then San Miguel de Allende (where Jack's buddy, Neal Cassady died on the railroad tracks, and I found a first edition of Jack's first book, *Town and the City*, a bit water damaged but still a first edition). That triangle of travel has me traveling on the road with Jack Kerouac, David Amram always encouraging me to go on! I had a chance to video an interview with David Amram and will be writing up that story soon.

I once went to Big Sur just to sit at the place where Jack described going crazy in his novel, *Big Sur*. I did not go crazy! This could be a travel column. After New York I head to the West Coast, rent a car in San Jose and enjoy San Francisco and the Young Rhetorician's Conference in Monterey then the Monterey Bay Blues Festival as the grand finale. I return to head to Mexico for the month of July to study Spanish, speak at the Author's Sala on July 11, and attend a music festival, Toltequidad, featuring pre-hispanic music, dance and art on July 17-20. I have visited before, staying at La Posada de los Minos, an exquisite small hotel designed and built by an Austin couple. Great ambiance, great food, great people. See [www.mineraldepozos.com](http://www.mineraldepozos.com) for an update on this destination about an hour from San Miguel de Allende.

I just might be missing the annual Willie Nelson Picnic at Verizon Theater in Selma this year. Just can't do it all, right?

And, did I say I am grateful each day for each moment of my life? I once had my granddaughter create a gratitude list at the end of the day, recommended by Luis Caldiera, and I know have too much gratitude to express just once a day. The course I took with Landmark Education was called "Causing the Miraculous." Wonder how that all fits in? Well, I am grateful and loving this road called my life. For sure.

The Monterey Bay Blues Festival always has a Texas connection. Shemekia Copeland, daughter of Texas Twister Johnny Clyde Copeland (a founding board member of THMF in 1987) has played this festival several times, and our interview is a chapter in my book on the women of Texas music. Check out their website and notice that BB King finale! He wrote the introduction to my first book on Texas songwriters. As you can read, I am excited to present the “synchronicity” that weaves my life together. And there is even more. No “coincidence” here, rather meaningful patterns abound.

The Young Rhetorician’s Conference in Monterey was great this year, with several interesting sessions on comics and non-fiction writing in the classroom, the Moslem student in the classroom, and anti-Christian prejudice in the classroom. Diana Roberts and I introduced the topic of communication in a global context at the first session, creating a context for all our discussions. I do love the YRC in Monterey, California.

Then the blues festival where Texas connections abound. I first heard the family band from Tupelo, Mississippi, at Bluebonnet Blues Festival in Marble Falls this year. Homemade Bluz Band. They rocked the main stage in Monterey this year, with several standing ovations after Ryan, age 15, took solid guitar leads on a guitar made from a car muffler. His younger brother, Kyle Perry, added his own style on bass while younger sister, Taya, age 9, danced all over the yellow drum set. Dad, playing harmonica in the group, stepped back to give his family center stage. That trio caused a lot of eyebrows to raise as people said, “How old are they?” They command the stage as if that is home for them, and their generosity of spirit off stage is quite contagious. Be sure and get in on the secret; buy “Pay Me No Mind,” as the world pays them mind! BB King closed down the main stage on Sunday night, June 29, and he is a fan of these youngsters too!

I also met Dennis Murphy, a musician who heads up the Blues in the Schools project. The band of young people I heard playing as the “Honor Blues Band,” thrilled me with their enthusiasm and talent. I took several videos on my camera, watching an 8 year old wail the blues as she took leads on her guitar, Mimi. Dennis is going to create a program for the 2009 June YRC convention! I have invited him to bring a young performer. Hans Guth and Gabriele Rico started the YRC 24 years ago, and Sterling Warner has taken over the rein, putting together a great conference each year. Sara Blake and I help, but Sterling pulls it all together. A good California/Texas connection.

The Monterey Bay Blues Festival is well-organized and run by a friendly board of directors who walk around making us all feel welcome. Make plans for next June and check them out on the web. THMF will also have some photos up soon.

I noticed on the Willie Nelson website that women did not make the list of performers for the picnic on July 4. Now I know this man with many wives and daughters appreciates the women so we can expect to hear women. But, why not a listing, I wonder. Some of the familiar names include Johnny Bush, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Los Lonely Boys (hate to miss them!), Billy Joe Shaver, Ray Price, Asleep at the Wheel, David Allen Coe and more. I’ll bet Paula Nelson does play! And of course sister Bobbie, on piano with Willie on stage, will also perform. In the past I have heard Pauline Reese and Stephanie Urbina Jones, and Lee Ann Womack (all interviews in my book!). He also has a show at Carl’s Corner in Hillsboro to benefit the Freddy Powers Parkinson Foundation July 1-3. Then he heads to Houston with the show for July 5. The man never slows down! Except to watch sunset in Luck, Texas, with his daughters, 4 of them in my photo!

My second oral history includes Lana and Bobbie. Daughter Susie and I are working on a children's book together, and I was invited to spend one day at Luck, Texas, the movie set Willie also calls international headquarters. He is rescuing horses now so I took many photos, The children's book I am writing has two horses, Brownie and Spirit, as main characters listening into the wind. Susie and I had a ball, and I got to take the classic father/daughter photo as the sun set on Luck, Texas. I, of course, also took my medicine drum, and Willie appeared after the drumming. Hm.....I did share my "vision" with him that we create a Spirit of Love concert in Kerrville featuring Willie and Bobbie. When they are both on stage, love fills the room! We'll see how that goes.

A final report on the Book People performance: Texana Dames, Mandy Mercier, Catherine Powers, Lee Duffy, Karen Abrahams and Barbara Kooyman all showed up to tell stories and play songs with me. I started by reading the poem I used in the book by our own departed Jeanne Slobod. As Barbara closed the evening with the song, "My name is truth, and you can't kill me," the women slowly started joining her, sitting around her singing harmony. I became quite brave and sat down as well (wondering if I could get up). We ended showing community and harmony. I would like to take that show, those women On The Road.

Look forward to a Inter-tribal Pow Wow in Bandera at Mansfield Park. Put Aug. 30-31 on your calendar for this special event, "Circle of Life Pow Wow." Call Genie Strickland at 830-896-4447 for information. See [www.celebratebandera.com](http://www.celebratebandera.com) On August 24 I'll be with Miss Neesie at the monthly gospel brunch at Casbeer's in San Antonio. A new venue (see [www.casbeers.com](http://www.casbeers.com)) provides more space. At \$12/ticket they still only sell 100 so get our reservation early. Proceeds from books we sell (Miss Neesie is a chapter!) benefit the food bank in San Antonio. We'll also have some THMF items for sale...t-shirts and CD covers. Buffet begins at noon with music at 1 p.m.

Ils sont partis...and off to pack again! kh