

On The Road For April 2009

By Dr. Kathleen Hudson

I was on the road March 1 in Austin, Texas, attending the 5th annual Texas Heritage Songwriter's Association awards show. This year the featured songwriters were **Allen Shamblin, Michael Martin Murphy, Willie Nelson and Guy Clark**. **Aaron Barker** handed out some of the awards and joined the circle later. **Ray Benson** received the Darrel K. Royal Patron Award. I loved the applause that rippled through the theater when Darrell and Edith walked to their seats a little late. And the videos of people talking about the inductees (**Freddy Powers'** talk was especially poignant) added another layer to the rich show. I hope to collaborate with this group in the future. We have shared missions!

After the awards were given to a packed house in the Paramount Theatre, the songwriters returned on stage to engage in the "song pull." Each told a story and sang a song. This set alone reminded me that I want to write about the poetry of Texas music. Willie's song, admitting that he was not superman, told a truth many of us can relate to. And, of course, we heard "Wildfire," by Murphy and "Randall Knife" by Guy.

I was excited knowing that Monday night, March 2, the Texas Writers Conference at Schreiner was also showcasing **Guy Clark**, this time in an intimate setting with my creative writing students reading during an open mike. Some of the students had written responses to Guy's writing, make the evening really special to me. I have been listening to Guy for over 25 years, first meeting him at the Kerrville Folk Festival. I love knowing that my kids love him!

I heard one student tell Guy that she had been listening to him since childhood thanks to her parents. We looked at each other and laughed. The time has come when the children of our fans and students start telling us stories!

Jeff Gavin (Cabin10 Productions/Rice Festival) provided the sound, and **Stan Morris** (Melody Corner) ran it for us. Support your local music store! These two men saved my life that night. Thanks!

The March 4 **Patrice Pike** played the coffeehouse. Again, the students read during the open mike, honoring Women's History Month. **Erika Kluthe**, a poet who has shared her work with my class, opened for Patrice, and then Patrice took over! We had another little sound glitch, and **Roy Ybarra and Tito** came to the rescue, setting up sound worthy of Patrice in a 15 min. break after the open mike. Thanks to **Sound Station Studio** and these generous guy. Yep, Kerrville seems to be full of generous folks.

I loved all of Patrice's songs, but when she sat down low, drum between her knees, and sang acapella while accompanying herself on drum, I was swept away! She has a standing gig in Houston on Wednesday, but changed that this month just to be part of our tribute to Women's History Month. Thanks, Patrice. Her music is sensuous and edgy, and she also shared herself in conversation with my creative writing class before the show.

April 1 is the last THMF coffeehouse at Schreiner this spring. **Marcus Rubio** will be featured, and this young man will not disappoint you. We will have a poetry slam with the students, an open mike, a featured performance by Thom The World Poet and a show by Marcus. He is at Trinity University now, his first year. I see **Leonard Cohen** (who

plays Austin April 1-2) and Dylan dancing in this man's blood. Since Cohen and Dylan are two of my first favorites, I love seeing someone hooked on them as I was at age 17. I was at TCU in Ft. Worth when I discovered my passion for music. Folk music was the doorway, but those evenings at Panther Hall opened up my heart for country as well. Peter, Paul and Mary toured then, along with Joe Cocker Mad Dogs and Englishman Tour. I found out about Buffy St. Marie, and my passion for music, words and rhythm, bloomed full. The buds were there from those days at Camp El Tesoro, singing camp songs around a campfire on the Brazos River. Glad to have these Texas roots!

I am looking for a way to hear Leonard "Suzanne" Cohen. Might have to fly out to Los Angeles for his show there. Seems his manager absconded with most of his life savings, and this world tour is necessary to his life. His rabid fans are glad to have him back out on the road. Just check the internet for all the Cohen gatherings. His cult-like status is well-earned. I even sat on the bed in the Chelsea Hotel last June for an interview on the Rockabilly Radio Series sponsored by THMF and receiving a Peabody Award. Why the Chelsea? Listen to Leonard's song. I can see, looking back, that my life often imitates the songs I love!

I was invited to attend the **Tejas Festival** in Rockdale March 6-7. On Friday I spoke with the 8th grade class on my life as a writer. Belle Starr made a sneak appearance during my talk, and I found out that I love talking with groups of strangers about what I love. Well, I knew that already, but I found out even more about that thrill. The festival included a car show, music at the Depot, railroad displays, living history and more. Rockdale was rocking. On Saturday I was featured at the library with about 12 other writers. I was sitting across from **Joe Nick Patoski** as he signed his new book on Willie Nelson. And they had a Willie look-alike contest. Joe spoke, saying that Willie was not only an American icon, but also might end up being one of the most important figures in our 20th century history! I like that perspective. Joe is a passionate speaker, and he's been writing about Texas music since he moved to Austin in the 70's. He saw many of the scenes I wish I had seen.

March 26 I performed at a coffeehouse in Wimberley called **Maui Wowie**. I was recommended by Thom The World Poet, and I performed the words of the women I interviewed in a spoken word piece (no singing here!). And Belle Starr showed up. Butch Hancock was recording his next album in Wimberley, and he was in the audience. I could not get him to sing the Woody Guthrie version of "Belle Starr." Oda Lisa, the hostess, and Thom "The World" Poet brought such life to the evening. And I stayed at Oda's house, discovering that she both writes and produces. A kindred spirit!

Just had a call from **CJ Berkman**, former teacher at Tivy and South Texas Redneck deluxe. He and I worked on creative projects the first year I moved to town. He has since published several books of poetry that I love, and he has now moved back to Bandera after years of moving around Texas.

He told me news of a recent stroke that left him struggling with language! I told him we need more of his words so work hard in therapy. Berkman once hosted an afternoon at the Leon Spring Café (now history), and I often heard Townes Van Zandt there, or Billy Joe Shaver. I love using CJ's poetry as an inspiration in my own creative writing classes. And he wrote a poem about me once: "She's Cheryl Doreen, my rodeo queen....." Yeah, I moved to this town riding horses, barrel racing, and trail riding. Hm...those days

are over now. But the two horses I do have love hanging out in my pasture, awaiting the granddaughters.

March 7 was an important date for me. Not only did Angel Jones (my granddaughter) have a birthday, but so did the late **Townes Van Zandt** and **Roxy Gordon. Griff Lundberg** celebrated in his usual way at the Cactus Café in Austin with a tribute. Butch Hancock and Larry Monroe shared the hosting, while Butch gave us many great Townes' songs, including the long and winding "Mr Mudd and Mr. Gold." I remember the first tribute after the Jan. 1 death of Townes. We arrived to find roses in each chair. I was moved, and Griff remembered that I had attended! He just celebrated 30 years by having Guy Clark, a compadre of Townes Van Zandt, play for two nights at the end of February.

The texture of voices and interpretations gave new voice to Townes Van Zandt. And Betty Soo was one of only two women who gave voice to his writing. I heard new songs as well as brand new interpretations. Beaver Riley and David Garza did some spectacular work, and I was inspired to think about my own interpretations of the poetry I love. Yes, interpretation can be creative and original.

I am honored to be working with Harold Eggers, the former road manager and business partner of Townes. We are co-editing a book of essays on the life of Townes, a writer to be reckoned with at all times, someone who can move under your skin with his words and his delivery. Sometimes soft, sometimes hard, his voice is "soft as glass," and he's a gentle man.

Other **highlights** include:

a sad love song saying "close your eyes I'll be here in the morning,"

a big NEW audience for the tribute,

Mickey White and Donnie Silverman reliving their roles as sidemen with Townes,

"I ain't leaving your love babe,"

"Love can be and still be lonely,"

Butch reporting that he knows about 25 Townes' songs now,

"Rex's Blues,"

a song written the night Janis Joplin died,

Griff reporting that Townes played the Cactus Café in Austin 89 times,

Tim Henderson,

Rex Foster,

hearing that Steve Earle is putting out an album of Townes songs,

Betty Soo singing one I never heard called "Squash,"

David Garza as creative director of the evening,

seeing Ann Rice (Townes' cousin),

Jimmie Dale Gilmore and son Collin singing while I sat by Jimmie's mother,

"Snowin' in Raton" by Butch, Jimmie and Collin,

"Pancho and Lefty" by Butch and Mickey

George Ensle and his tribute to Townes

Graham Webber (a new discovery for me) with the right voice to sing Townes (gorgeous)

Darrel Gleason singing "The Hole," and he also produces the sound at the Cactus

Jesse Taylor died March 7, ironic (Lubbock guitarist, soulful man, strong guitarist and much loved)

Amy Bodruck (another discovery for me) singing "Delta Momma,"

Michael Fracasso singing "Loretta"

Mark Ambrose telling of Blaze Foley, Bob Dylan and Townes then singing “The Catfish Song,”

And Butch, Mickey and David Garza singing “Ain’t gonna sing no lonesome tune....”
A great night was had by all!

And now for South by Southwest Highlights. I was and am still mesmerized by the long and rich talk given by **Quincy Jones**. He and Ray Charles met as teenagers and made a pact that goes as follows: “Not one drop of our self worth depends on what others think about us,” and they proceeded to live their lives out of that pact! The rest of the talk was woven together with a golden thread of love. Each story, whether it be Frank Sinatra saying, “Q, live each day like it’s your last, and one day you’ll be right,” or meeting with Alice Walker to help convince Spielberg to direct a film version of her epistolary novel, carried a universal truth as well as a specific tale. I wish I had a tape of that speech to play over and over!

The vast array of professional panels, workshops, interactive groups and filmings made this year a gourmet spread of the entire world music scene. I could not hop from event to event this time, rather chose my place to stay put. The convention center was showing a film on the life of **Blaze Foley**, dearly departed street songwriter, and a short on the accordion. Due to technical difficulties, we had the rare chance to just hear the directors talk with each other, then hear a performance by three of the young men in the short by **Hector Galan**, also producer of a beautiful documentary on Los Lonely Boys. Hector graciously took over the mike and asked **Kevin Triplett**, producer of Blaze film, a series of great questions. Mandy Mercier opened the evening with haunting renditions of his songs. Knowing she carried the moniker, “One of Blaze’s girlfriends,” made the performance even richer. And the girlfriend who lived with Blaze when he was Deputy Dog, Sybil Rosen, had a book signing for her new book with University of North Texas Press on the life of Blaze. She, too, was in the audience. When Mandy sang the words, “I saw daylight in your eyes,” I had the full body reaction of chills!

Gurf Morlix, a stunning Texas producer and performer, was also in attendance. He has produced some of the most interesting music in the state, and on Saturday, April 4, he joins Ray Wylie Hubbard at Gritt and Groove Fest at Luckenbach. My kind of music festival! The edgy stuff that rocks. Gates open at noon, and I’ll be there after my granddaughters quit riding horses at my house. Hays Carl and Band of Heathens!

Lost John Casner produced The Outhouse Tapes after Blaze died (was killed), and he also worked hard at getting Blaze’s music to Merle Haggard. “If I Could Only Fly” became a hit when Merle sang it!

Each story here is its own feature, by the way!

Jarvis Cocker gave a two-hour lecture on the stories behind songs. His talk pushed me over the edge I was teetering on...the edge where I was trying to decide whether to write another book on some aspect of Texas music. After his talk, I was inspired to do so. Not only did he talk about the power of words, the difference in a song and a poem, but he also used great examples from Leonard Cohen, The Beatles, and Gordon Lightfoot. Yes, I had my photos taken with him, even though I had to ask the rather young man sitting beside me just “who” is Jarvis Cocker. “Why, lead singer for Pulp,” he answered with wonder in his eyes. Well, we can’t all know everything!

The Austin Music Award did not disappoint. When **Shawn Sahm** came running out, slinging his guitar and dancing with it too, I knew the tribute to his dad, **Doug Sahm**, was

off and running. Lots of great winners, lots of well-deserved honor (**Alejandro Escovedo**, for one), and lots of fun! Speedy Sparks and Ernie Durwawa added their own personal history on stage with Doug as Augie Meyers sang some of his classics. A highlight included a rousing version of “She’s About A Mover.” Can’t stand still with that one.

And more to come that merges with Kerrville history, the annual Roky Erickson finale, psychedelic this year with Black Angels backing him up. Part of his band, The Thirteenth Floor Elevators, called Kerrville home, including Terry Sutherland whose mom still lives on West Main (a neighbor of Jimmie Rodgers). Each name I mention calls for much more attention that this column can give. Many more books are calling out to be written.

THMF office will have **Bethany Jordan** as intern for the summer. She has already created a THMF newsletter each month, and we look forward to her contribution to the Living History Day. I am still looking for a partner, someone who has a little time and a lot of interest to help me run this organization. 21 years doing this alone is enough! Well, not really alone with hundreds of volunteers and Tim Wilton (who now has another fulltime job!). Any partners out there??? Seems to me someone retired with expertise on running a business who wants to get out of the house 10 hours a week might be a good place to start.

While in Austin I had a phone call from a longtime friend and songwriter, **Mark Ambrose**. After a 2-year break, while he became “Mr. Dad,” he wanted to talk about his songs. He told me that he played guitar on a Gillian Welch album, and she has duets with him on his album, “Put The Hammer Down.” You can find Mark on MySpace, www.markambrose.com and utube. Ah....a new age of music is upon us. No more paper press kits!

Mark showed up at the annual September Tribute to **Jimmie Rodgers** one year with Roxy Gordon. After hearing one song, I put him up on stage as “another Jimmie,” and the audience was pleased. That was years ago. Now Mark is playing festivals and house concerts. “I like to play anywhere people gather and want to listen to songs. Bars are not usually that interesting for a performance, although I also play them.” Let’s get Mark to a house concert in Kerrville!

Congratulations to **Hill Country Happenings Magazine** for the stunning 5-year anniversary edition in March. I did not realize that much time had flown since I first said “Yes” to Natalie and Monica when they asked for this column. I had to chuckle a bit at Greg’s story on that time AND putting the competition to rest! I have a stack of new music book by UT Press to share with you and recordings galore! Augie Meyers is coming out with a pure country album soon, Shawn Sahm just performed on a tribute album to his dad, Steady Freddy is producing a very young woman performing interesting songs, and so on. The list just goes on and so does this column!

Il's sont partis....down the road.....KH

You are always invited to contact me at kathleenhudson123@hotmail.com

www.kathleenhudson.net

www.texasheritagemusic.org