

On The Road
June 15, 2009
Kathleen Hudson in San Miguel de Allende

Here I sit in sunny **San Miguel de Allende** writing my stories from the road and from my memories of the music journey this last month! And my heart knows how to travel! I had some amazing experiences at the Kerrville Folk Festival, including a passionate set with Peter Yarrow and his son Christopher; a rocking and soulful rendition of great songs by Jimmy LaFave; an uplifting moment with Walt and Tina Wilkins as they shared new songs from a new album. Yes, The Mystiqueros were in full force on an acoustic set rife with harmony. Susan Gibson, with a new album produced by Walt, brought her own strength to the stage (with Marian Brackney adding harmony and violin/fiddle), and the festival ended with two more powerful women, Patrice Pike and Ruthie Foster. I did miss that spectacular evening (as reported by Dr. David Mulry of Schreiner University) since I was on the road in Mexico. I can hear Patrice and Ruthie in my head at all times; they live there now!

I did attend the first night of the festival, listening to Ken Gaines as he kicked off the entire event with words like, "Everything I love and hold dear, comes together in the distance, way out here." Yes, I have always love the writing of these Texas performers. Susan added, "I'm happiest when I'm moving. I'd rather be a comet than a star."

I spent three days in Ft. Worth with David and Annabel Pillow, my parents! That road trip north was on Highway 16, lined with bright yellow flowers. The blue key, bright green fields and yellow flowers reminded me of a new painting project I started with Bitsy Woods, a sheet of those colors swirling around. Yes, I like to try new things. Why now?

My participation in the Art Happening at the Benini Sculpture Garden in Johnson City provided inspiration for me to continue my research into the songs of Texas. The Texana Dames, along with Tommy Hancock, gave us a set of songs that spanned the gulf from Tex-mex to swing to jazz to country. Shannie played the first day of the Happening. When Annie threw back her head and sang the first song in Spanish, I was amazed. The voice just rolled out of her, the musical partnership with a partner in life, all brought passion and insight into their performance. Yes, I did invite them to come sing at the Sept. 25 Living History Day at Schreiner University. And I asked the Dames to come share some music. Our new emphasis on the heritage of our neighbour, Mexico, is the perfect place for Traci Lamar to play the accordion and sing in Spanish. The Dames, Charlene, Conni, and Traci, mother and two daughters, is a most beautiful combination of talent, passion, heritage, and family.

And I was Belle Starr talking about Hudson, her book on women of Texas, at this Art Happening. See the website for future programs.

Before heading to San Miguel, I experience an evening of wonderful music in Spanish at the home of Ramon Luera in Laredo. Terri Sharp and I had met these musicians the Conjunto Festival in San Antonio. Now we loaded up and headed south, Terri with guitar and Spanish songs in hand! These men gather each Friday (for over 30 years!) to play music. We heard many styles of music with most songs in Spanish, much to our delight! Terri sang with various configurations playing behind her. Glad Terri is also participating in the Living History Day Tribute to Hispanic Heritage Month. We both love Mexico and the traditions of this culture. We both want to celebrate these traditions in dance and song as often as we can! This event is a feature story on its own, so I must

just whet your tastebuds telling you there will be more stories!! Hoping to get Junior Pruneda down there for some music.

Don't miss Junior and friends on Sundays out at the Hunt Store, another Hill Country Tradition. His story alone is a long book...don't miss being around him and listening to the music. Years with Ernest Tubb are but a small part of the resume!

June 12 I participated in another Art Happening at the Author's Sala in San Miguel de Allende. Susan Page invited me to participate again. Last year I presented my work on the women of Texas. Tim Hazell played music as I told stories, and Belle did appear.

This year we created an on-stage improvisation including the stunning work of Ken Bichel, an Emmy award winning composer, performer, pianist, and off the page kind of character. The three of us agreed to improvise, a first for me. I can improvise easily alone! This was a new risk, and Tim Hazell is a huge catalyst wherever he works. Ken agrees. Tim pulls the best out of us all, and his willingness to return to Schreiner this Fall as artist-in-resident for the Center For Innovative Learning excites me beyond belief.

Tim and I read excerpts from a manuscript in progress, *Conversations Across Borders*, and Ken improvised music behind us. We ended the evening with a large conte drawing by Tim accompanied by my woven words and Ken's music. What fun!! Yes, I am all about the spirit of play these days. My dream would be to showcase Tim and Ken in Kerrville!

Ken and I had lunch at the Instituto de Allende the day after the show. I wanted to know him better. His own life is rich with spiritual practice, rich with creative experiences, rich with a joyful spirit. I am newly inspired to create more possibility in my life just from my time with both Ken and Tim. And both deserve full feature stories one day! Meanwhile, I will continue to bask in the light of creativity that emanates from both of these men.

I hope to return for the debut of "Kid Rock," a soul's journey in music and song, created by the synergistic energy of Tim and Ken. This show will be held in San Miguel at St. Paul's Episcopal Church (a great auditorium) on July 10-12. Another great show for a Kerrville stage one day!

Another new experience for me occurred at the Kuni Doni Restaurant on Salida de Celeya, near my apartment. Loy Geddes, my San Miguel sister, invited us there to share her new find, a restaurant devoted to a "green" environment. Arnulfo, founder and musician, was there to play music, and I was moved to hear sounds created on African instruments that Arnulfo made on a ten-month stay in Africa. We also heard new sounds, new language, new rhythms. Yes, San Miguel is international in scope, a great place for expanding consciousness in many ways! Arnulfo explained that the Jembay drum, once a tree in Africa, expressed a connection between spirit and the earth. His solo on the drum also told a story. The language was Djoula. One instrument was strung with a gourd bass, a Goni, the grandmother of the harp. The name of the restaurant is in the Otomi language and means flower of the kitchen.

Back to Texas, ahead in July is a special concert at a new club in Pipe Creek hosted by Jud Pickard, the previous founder of the Leon Spring Café, which showcased the best in Texas music for years. On July 10 Billy Joe Shaver will sing his songs and tell his stories. Call Jud at 830-510-4661 for more details.

Also ahead is the Texas leg of the second baseball field tour, a collaboration between Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, and John Cougar Mellencamp. I plan on attending three Texas shows, including Round Rock, Grand Prairie, and the Whataburger Field in Corpus Christi (Aug. 4, 5, 7). Go to Dylan's website for tickets and information. He also plays Houston on Aug. 2, and Lubbock on Aug. 8. Maybe I should just get on the

road again for this tour! Heard both men in 1963 when I started college at TCU in Ft. Worth. Imagine that!

We recently experienced a big loss in the history of Texas music, Poodie, the longtime road manager for Willie. He was more than manager though. He took care of all details, made sure Sister Bobbie was comfortable, and lived out his life as part of the “family.” I can’t imagine a tour without him, although David Anderson and others are also longtime family members and know how to take the band on the road. My heart goes out to them at this time of loss. I saw the love present on stage and off when Poodie was around.

July 10 at Roddy Tree Ranch, located on Highway 39 toward Hunt, expect another beautiful evening of Texas music under the stars. Slim Ritchey and Jitterbug Vipers will be showcased, and I know firsthand what a joy this group brings to a venue. I remember seeing them play their jazz in El Jardin in San Miguel as part of the November Jazz Festival one year, and I love their ongoing participation in the Living History Day, exciting young people with an experience of Texas Jazz.

Let me end this leg of the trip with a nod to THE INSIDER’S GUIDE TO SAN MIGUEL. My friend, Riccardo Simeone, bought the magazine from founder Archie Dean, and is building on his successful record of keeping tourists up to date on San Miguel. Riccardo, a retired businessman from Boston, has added a updated website and a shopping cart, as well as a set of discount coupons in the back of the book. These additions link businesses and tourists in ways helpful to both. I know many Hill Country road warriors who head south each year. Many call me with questions. Now you all have your own personal tour guide in this book. www.thesanmiguelguide.com

Il s ont parties and down the road. Kh
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