

On The Road
August 2009

I left Ft. Worth this morning (July 14) and headed south **down** I-35. "Why?" you ask. I drove **up** Highway 16 to visit on July 12, awestruck by the green grass and stands of trees along the way. After two wonderful days with **David and Annabel Pillow**, those parents who encouraged me to follow the road/s of my choice/s, I sacked up my stories and memories and headed south to Kerrville....down I-35. For a change, perhaps. To see new country. To imagine new stories.

Writing on a night when President Obama throws out the first pitch at the all-star game in St. Louis, and **John Cougar Mellancamp, Willie Nelson, and Bob Dylan** take their ballpark tour to the Coca-Cola Park in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a few questions come to mind. First, what's with summer baseball in North America? Second, is it somehow related to all the baggage we attach to the word "family"? Finally, why are we Texans getting five of the thirty-two shows (2.5 times as much as any state in the nation) that Mellancamp, Nelson, and Dylan are putting on this summer?

Yes, after two days of sharing memories with David and Annabel, visiting with brothers John and Charlie, painting with sister-in-law Paula Pillow, my head is filled with feelings about family. And, in anticipation of Dylan's march through Texas, I listened to him from 1962 to 2009 the entire trip up and down the road. And, no, I did not paint my masterpiece, but I do know I am going to be lonesome when my parents go. Family, music, and trying to eff the ineffable keep coming together and dancing together on the head of a metaphorical pin. Or at least that's what I'm thinking as I drive and sing and dream.

One year ago in August I was visiting Willie Nelson's Luck, Texas, to talk with daughter Susie about a children's book. I was there when a daughter he had never met showed up...and I had the chance to see many of the girls in action (all generous and inclusive). Lana joined us, as well as Paula and her mom, Conni. We watched sunset from the porch at Luck, Texas, and I contemplated family, Texas music, stories and songs. That was a year ago.

Interesting to see the pattern emerge again, as I look at the tickets I have purchased for three of the five Texas shows.....Round Rock (August 4), Corpus Christi (August 5), and Grand Prairie(August 7). I am willing to miss Houston and Lubbock but might decide later to include them. What is a 63-year-old woman doing heading out to a concert, standing room only at a baseball park, in the heat of summer? My answer: How can I miss the opportunity to see **Bob Dylan** and **Willie Nelson**?

I was attending TCU in 1963 when I discovered folk music and Panther Hall. Bob Dylan wrote the folk music I loved; Willie Nelson played Panther Hall. And, yes, I also discovered the Skyliner Ballroom and Ray Sharpe. Eclectic, rather than Ann, should be my middle name. Peter, Paul, and Mary played on campus for our homecoming, and I discovered Buffy St. Marie at a small party during my freshman year.

The connections keep on keepin' on. Take baseball, for example. A baseball freaky friend of mine said, "Baseball is as American as mom, apple pie,

Chevrolet and the fourth of July!" I have two sons, one of whom played a lot of baseball. Little League and all that. Now his son, my grandson, is playing while dad coaches.

Dylan is known to love the literary and musical richness of baseball (witness the fact that he devoted one of his earliest "Theme Time Radio" shows to the national part-time and sang an unforgettable version of "Take Me out To The Ballgame"). For him, it's no doubt a part of the "old, weird America" that he often mines. So once again he's hitting the minor league parks—in Houston, round Rock, Corpus Christi, Grand Prairie, and Lubbock—the first week of August. The circus will be in town and the kids get in free.

The fact the kids get in free is only superficially superficial. It's Bob's and Willie's and John's nod to their kinds of family values. Willie Nelson has long described his band as family, and the loss of Poodie, long-time road manager and family member, will be felt this summer.

Dylan's view of family is no doubt, like everything about him when compared to Willie or anyone else for that matter, more vexed. His early biography is full of his claims that he had no family (think of "Like A Rolling Stone"), and his middle years are filled with his moving on from the family he created. And yet, here he comes, riding in to town with the ad hoc family of his so called Never Ending Tour, a band that has existed in various combinations for the past twenty years.

I met bass player, **Tony Garnier**, one night in Montreux, Switzerland, at the Jazz Festival. **Flaco Jimenez** had taken me backstage. As we three sat eating, a messenger came out of the room close by, saying, "Flaco, Dylan wants to see you." Flaco and Oscar (his bass player) got up and left, leaving me to talk with Tony, who has a brother who played music in Austin. When they returned, knowing I was dying to go in with them (but was not invited), Oscar brought me a Swiss note signed by Dylan. I still have that note!

And I ask **Jeff Rosen**, once a year, if Bob Dylan would play a tribute to **Jimmie Rodgers** in Kerrville. Once a year to keep from being labeled "pest." I often wonder if the request would carry more weight if **Kinky** would ask. Or **Ray Benson** of Asleep at the Wheel. One time at a Dylan concert in Austin, I saw Ray loan him a pedal steel for the western swing sound. One time outside yet another ballpark in Kansas (the 2005 tour), I saw Ray show up to meet Tony Garnier (who arrived on a big bike) and visit. I waved, and they waved back.

That same evening I interviewed Lana Nelson for my book on the women of Texas music. Then I stood outside watching the backstage area, only to see a stunning redhead arrive, also waiting. That woman was **Carolyn Wonderland**, an interview in my book and a photo on the front cover. We talked. Then I saw it happen...Bob Dylan's road manager walked over, handing her a ticket to the show and a backstage pass. I just watched...and hoped. Later I took the ticket I had purchased, entered the ballpark, bought t-shirts, and enjoyed the concert, watching **Elana Fremerman** playing lead on "Highway 61 Revisited." Her fiddle work enhanced his keyboard, and I was really wishing I had a camera. Yes, Elana was in the book as well.

Close calls for me? I look at Dylan's connections with Texas music and his love for Jimmie Rodgers, and I wonder what I would say if we did meet. Meanwhile, I

love the collection of Dylan memorabilia that is growing around me. Sometimes the talismans are as close as we can get, and that is surely much more than we had when we started.

Maybe one day the chance to meet the great grandsons of Jimmie Rodgers will call him to Kerrville. **Austin and Cody** (sons of Jimmie Dale Court, the grandson of Jimmie) will be at our **September 25** tribute to Jimmie Rodgers and to Hispanic Heritage...two loves of Dylan. He started his own record label, Egyptian, to put out his own tribute album to Jimmie in 1997, the same year Willie Nelson played our scholarship fundraiser.

I see a web of connections that will call Bob home! Home to **Blue Yodeler's Paradise** at 617 West Main where the ghost of Jimmie still sings. And Bob must love Texas; just look at the many connections. So if you're still rolling with me, WE see a web of connections that will call Bob to another of his spiritual homes, to another of his families of choice, Texas. This family includes Kinky Friedman (Rolling Thunder Review), Townes Van Zandt (Dylan sang "Pancho and Lefty" at an Austin concert once, saying, "This is a song by your best songwriter." I was there.), Augie Meyers (Dylan asked him to bring that Sir Douglas Quintet sound into the studio with his Vox Continental) who now has a county album out (in hopes of radio play this time), and Flaco (accompanying him on stage at Montreux), and Carolyn Wonderland (asking her to jam with him in Houston once), and Elana Fremerman (on tour playing a wild fiddle with Bob), Janis Joplin, Norah Jones, the late and wonderful Stephen Bruton (a Ft. Worth legendary cat who succumbed to cancer this year), T-Bone Burnett (another alumni of the school of Ft. Worth, my hometown), Steve Earle, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Nanci Griffith, Don Henley, Carolyn Hester (first played in her band, she's a director at the Kerrville Folk Festival and a chapter in my first book on Texas songwriters), Lightnin' Hopkins (a hero for Townes as well), Flaco Jimenez, Bob Johnston (now living in Austin), Kris Kristofferson, Leadbelly, John Lomax, Alan Lomax, Mack McCormick, Willie Nelson (of course!), Roy Orbison, Tex Ritter, Jimmie Rodgers, Doug Sahm, Charlie Sexton, Jimmie Vaughan, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Wavy Gravy, and Peter Yarrow. Well, Peter lives in New York but celebrates his birthday at the Kerrville Folk Festival each year and helped found the New Folk Songwriters Contest.

The inclusive and interesting **BOB DYLAN ENCYCLOPEDIA**, put together by scholar Michael Gray, carries connections that no one imagined. I just pulled a few of the obvious Texas connections out. A great read for patterns and connections. Yes, I said that "c" word three times in one paragraph!

And now on the new **Augie Meyers** CD: As he starts out singing, "Sometimes I cry when I'm lonely, sometimes I cry when I'm blue," I start to wiggle around at this computer! Time to dance....smoky dance halls in Ft. Worth come to mind. I even saw Willie at the Stagecoach Inn during my college years and danced a two-step or two. Now Augie, with a history as rich as the history of Texas music, brings us a recording entitled "Country." He once told me, "I was tired of being told by radio that they had no station for my music. It was not in any one niche (just like "Texas" music!), so I have given them a clearly-titled album of country music. Let's see what happens now!" Got to love that man. He speaks for my

heart. Go to myspace or his website, www.augiemeyers.com for ongoing updates. And he has a huge heart!

Looking back at the month, I took my annual trip to the land of Steinbeck and Kerouac, Monterey, California, for the Young Rhetoricians' Conference. I have explored San Francisco for many years, and once took Highway One south to Big Sur. This year I focused on Monterey, giving a panel on the power of words with Schreiner English major, Dolores Kimball. Dylanologist David Gaines, from Southwestern University in Georgetown, added to the panel and gave the luncheon talk....on the transnational Bob!

After the conference I attended the **Monterey Bay Blues Festival**, a celebration of heritage and music like I've never seen! Not only is the festival warm and welcoming, but the stages, all three of them, are filled with extraordinary talent! I heard **Trudy Lynn** (an interview in my book on the women of Texas music) strut her stuff, a Texas diva! And I discovered that sitting outside when **Elvin Bishop** plays leads to serious dancing! He even jumped off stage and danced down the center aisle. Yes, I'm a new Elvin Bishop fan. He has played with everyone, but his interaction with this crowd was warm and friendly. Seemed he invited us to just join him in the fun. And we did! As he ran offstage, I jumped in his way for a quick question. "**Angela Strehli**, now living in California, has the most soul!" he answered as I asked him about the women in Texas. I first interviewed her at Josephine Street Ballroom in San Antonio then again at one South by Southwest. Clifford Antone loved her, as did many others. I was reminded that she had a cool club just up the road a bit.

The Monterey Bay Blues Festival is well-organized (everyone says this) and presents diversity in the music. They raise money for an educational program called Blues in the Schools and showcase new bands, winners of blues contests. This is my favorite festival to attend each June, and Texas connections abound! See www.MontereyBlues.com for ongoing information. 2010 is the 25th year celebration. President Billy F. De Berry says, "Being part of the Monterey Bay Blues Festival has been a life-changing experience, in large part due to the loyal supporters of the event. Yep, I am one of those supporters! Vivian Waldrup-Patterson is the executive manager, and she graciously takes care of everyone as she works with this large and active board of directors. The 52nd Monterey Jazz Festival will be September 18-20. See www.montereyjazz.org

As a producer of a festival, one that presents over 50 performers on **September 25**, on the campus of Schreiner University in Kerrville, I know the value of good volunteers, directors, performers and office help. This is my monthly request for volunteers who would like to participate in a special educational program that presents another way of learning using stories and songs. WE have work in the office now for volunteers, and we always need people to show up on Sept. 25 and help out. The set up is on the 24th with many Schreiner student groups helping. This year we will pay tribute to Hispanic Heritage at our first coffeehouse on Sept. 2, and at the Living History Day on Sept. 25, and at Luckenbach that evening with Joel Guzman and Sarah Fox.

Joel and Sarah are touring with a new CD called "**Conjuntazzo**," a tribute to their Tex-Mex roots. Read the full release on the THMF website. Meanwhile,

imagine "Conjunto America," where a potent mix of blues, boleros, polkas and cumbias all dance together. In 2005 they released the roots music album "Polkas, Gritos y Acordeone." featuring guests David Lee Garza and Sunny Saucedo. The CD went on to win the Latin Grammy and the American Grammy in their respective best Tejano album category.

Terri Sharp will also pay tribute to Lydia Mendoza with some special songs in Spanish. And Geronimo Trevino will play for a dance. What a day and night! Call 830-792-1945 to volunteer! We need you!!! We now have a presence on Facebook thanks to Mary Taylor, a new volunteer. The summer to this point, the concerts on the horizon, the activities in September all underscoring that on the days of the good flesh continuing, it's all one song, and we are all one family.

Thanks! Ils sont partis.....KH

www.kathleenhudson.net

www.texasheritagemusic.org