

ON THE ROAD

By Dr. Kathleen Hudson

June 2011

“The affairs of music ought, somehow, to terminate in the love of the beautiful.” Plato

My last road trip before writing this column was a wild moment on Friday, May 13, when I decided to head my car to San Antonio (without going home to get clothing or daily vitamins and supplements) and meet up with friends from Laredo who came to the **Conjunto Festival**, then head to Cibolo for an evening with granddaughters. This was all preparation for a trip early Saturday morning, up Highway 35, to Waxahachie to visit the Texas Musicians Museum, attend their annual crawfish boil and music festival, meet Tom, the director who has been asking me to consider working together for years, and end up in Colleyville visiting my parents. Whew.....that was one leg of the journey.

The Texas Musicians Museum, newly moved to **Waxahachie** from Hillsboro, is the dream vision of **Tom Kreason**, a man who used to purchase musician artifacts for the Hard Rock Cafes. His collection of memorabilia, now displayed on the second floor of an historic hotel in Waxahachie, The Rogers Hotel (not like Jimmie with a “d”), moved me to experience, and I was almost struck dumb as I stood in front of a field recorder used by Alan Lomax to collect the songs he heard! As a collector of stories, I was inspired and moved.

Waxahachie, home of the huge Texas Country Reporter Festival, is also home to a gorgeous courthouse, a scenic square, a radio station, café and music studio. Men stood in line for haircuts at the vintage barber shop in the hotel. What a great place to house an exhibit of music memorabilia. Tom has another vision: a way for the THMF to work with the TMM, providing educational programming. Right up my alley, for sure! Or down my road?

I also met some new musicians, danced a bit in the parking lot, resisted henna painting on my face (this time), and met Phil Hendrix and Janice, a couple of music lovers from Whitney. In fact, Phil is starting a house concert series at this large place located on Lake Whitney.

I met one band, **The Texas Blues Machine**, as they entered the museum. Leo Hull is bandleader and singer as well as a board member for the museum. His guitar player, **Benton Lawson**, is a 16-year-old whiz “sitting in” on that Saturday. We were in for a treat, as this young man took soulful leads on his left-handed blue guitar. He plays right-handed so only the neck appeared upside down. His dad told me Benton liked the guitar so bought it to play.

The rocking blues machine set closed down with Benton playing “Pride and Joy,” as one of the local musicians jumped up to sing it with Leo. Leo’s band tours the state, playing over 200 gigs a year. Passionate about the music. Dad also told me that Benton had a few lessons and was mainly self-taught, picking up styles and licks with speed, always ready to move on to the next learning. I call that “talent,” which I don’t have with music. I had to practice the picking structure for “Don’t Think Twice” all one summer before I could get through it. You talented people know who you are!

I chose a new road, north on 287, to head into Ft. Worth, ending up in Colleyville at la casa de mis padres. I did stop in West, Texas, as I drove up 35, buying kolaches for the

family. Dad, **David Pillow**, made me happy by eating two of them for supper! After a lovely breakfast with my parents (aren't I lucky to have them in my life?), I headed back down 35 at the request of Laredo friends. "You have to come to the Conjunto Festival's 30th anniversary!" I arrived just in time to hear **Eva Ybarra**, La Reina del Accordion, begin her set. Wow...what a joy to see her again. She is an important chapter in my book on the women of Texas music published by UT Press in 2007.

I heard some new music, loved the poster with Narcisso Martinez featured. I met him years ago with Valerio Longoria at this festival. **Max Baca and David Ferias** showed the audience why they are Grammy award-winning performers! **Terri Sharp** of Kerrville worked with Max on a new CD produced at the **Blue Cat Studio** in San Antonio. Terri has some of that music on Facebook and Youtube now! Great stuff. Check it out.

Watching the waves of dancers circle around the concrete pavilion, I listened to founder **Juan Tejada** invite us to support the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, an organization dedicated to preserving Latino Culture through support of all the art forms. I was newly inspired by him as the Texas Heritage Music Foundation heads to a 25th anniversary in 2012. And, of course, I had to take my turn dancing, even in the sandals I was wearing.

I saw a young woman in high high snake skin heels, moving to the music. I saw another woman with a silver ring on every finger and nails painted turquoise, dancing in the circle. Cumbia and salsa reigned with a little polka/two-step fitting in. A reminder, never miss this show! A man wearing a white long vest, purple lettering on it and a white hat with a purple crown walked by, leaving me wondering about the clothing. Seemed he was part of a "Table 99" historic group that comes every year from Houston. Stories abound at a festival that goes on this long.

WWW.KERRVILLEFOLKFESTIVAL.COM

The Kerrville Folk Festival is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Highlights from my 39 years of experience already overwhelm me. 1. Big storms washing through the meadow almost washing me and my kids away. We lived in Ft. Worth then and often camped out. 2. Keeping Bethany Yarrow with us one summer so she could have an experience camping stands out. **Peter Yarrow**, playing June 3, picked up all the kids one night and held them close as he sang "Puff the Magic Dragon" at a campfire. I first heard him do that when I was 18 years old at TCU. Loved seeing my kids around him. 3. Playing ball with **Townes Van Zandt** in the meadow. 4. Interviewing songwriters for my dissertation on writers and writing on summer. Those interviews led to many other projects in years to come! Guy Clark and I sitting and talking with journalists from Europe. 5. **Ingrid and George Dolis** were filming and preserving. They invited me to their house in Austin to be part of a Townes interview. We now have that on tape. 6. The day Townes asked me to drive him back to Austin with Eric Anderson, I met **Blaze Foley** and interviewed them all as Townes sat on the floor eating an onion and calling it a salad! Ah, those were the days.

After years of camping there, I moved to Kerrville and had animals at home to tend, so the camping went away. Now I live 50 minutes away and often resist going because of the drive home. Maybe time to bring the camping back!

On stage, I heard spectacular performances, one after the other. Too many to remember in one column. I was sitting by a columnist for Playboy Magazine one time when Joe Ely, Butch Hancock, Terry Allen, and Jimmie Dale Gilmore were playing together. She commented, "Now that's a lot of testosterone on that stage!"

Not only did I meet the best songwriters in the state, but I experienced such passion and inspiration that the rest of my life took a new road, one committed to full self-expression. And that is a big part of the **Kerrville Folk Festival**. If you are willing, an evening under a big Texas sky at the Kerrville Folk Festival can change your life! That is the magic of telling stories and singing songs in community.

This year is full of highlights as veterans return and new people join up! **Judy Collins** is returning. She introduced me to the song “Suzanne,” and thus to the songwriter who has brought me such joy, Leonard Cohen. **Asleep at the Wheel** returns along with many of the New Folk Songwriters. Marcia Ball will play the last night, June 12, along with **David Amram**. David has become such a treasure in my own creative life, inspiring me to write both my books on Texas music and encouraging me to perform. He did give me the chance to read the last chapter of **On The Road** by **Jack Kerouac** one evening, as David played music along with me. I repeated this once at the **Threadgills Theatre**, as David played keyboard. The two highlights of my performance life! On June 12 David will lead an 20 minute orchestral piece for the finale.

A bit about David. He has composed over 100 orchestral and concert pieces, worked with Johnny Depp, Hunter S. Thompson, Arthur Miller (ah, the literary connection), as well as Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Willie Nelson, Jerry Jeff Walker, and, my favorite, Jack Kerouac. Born in 1930 in Pennsylvania, he started piano at age seven and took up many instruments after that. His trademark is a necklace of flutes, collected from his travels into many folk arenas. Known for a solo with two penny whistles, he is subject of a new documentary, “David Amram: First 80 Years.” See him play these two whistles along with Dizzy Gillespie. Check out the trailer on Youtube.

Wow. For a man with six honorary doctorate degrees, Amram is still a man of the people. He will head to Okemah, Oklahoma, for the free **Woody Guthrie Festival July 13-17**, then the Philadelphia Folk Festival in August and a Jack Kerouac Festival in Pennsylvania August 27. Along with way he shows up in New York to do shows on the stories of the Beat writers and musicians monthly. My column, aptly named “On the road,” also pays tribute to Jack Kerouac and the spirit that Amram keeps alive in us all!

Marcia Ball is an entire book into herself! She has always been generous with her stories, and I have included her interview in both my books on Texas music. She is the bridge between the focus on songwriting and the focus on women. A regular show-stopper at the Big Band Bash in Fredericksburg each November, she helps Johnny Nicholas raise money for educational programming with music. This tall women with wrists held high as her fingers dance and play on the ivory keys, has always encouraged me to keep doing what I love. Her life is proof that this approach brings joy.

As you can read, I not only love the music and the performance, but I also love the people performing. They have become a source of inspiration in all areas of my life. Including my teaching.

Other folk festival highlights include the concerts at 7 p.m. during the week, the yoga classes, songwriting school, professional development for teachers, capo workshop, harmonica workshop, Jitterbug Vipers (Slim Ritchie and Meaux) doing funky jazz from 1-3 on Sunday, June 12, ballad tree sessions, songwriting circle behind the office, and all the great craft booths. I have tie-dyed silk, exotic jewelry, sensations for the skin and feet as well as great face painting. This year at booth #17 the Heart of Texas Bionic Energy Bands will be giving demonstrations. I must admit, I am wearing two of them right now.

For energy and for balance and health. Hm....maybe that inspired the wild road trip??
Better look into this closely. I do feel energized as I write this!

WWW.ROCKPORTMUSIC.COM

Another festival bringing magical music to the stage. The lineup for June 9-11 includes Delbert McClinton and Malford Milligan (for the Thursday night VIP party), Cory Morrow on Friday, and Guy Clark, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Willis Alan Ramsey, Jerry Jeff Walker on Saturday. Held outside in the harbor next to Charlotte Plummer's, this first year features the best of Texas songwriting. Each man has a signature song, a signature sound and a loyal fan base. Writing is the unifying thread. Promoter Tommy Moore, who drives the boat out to see whooping cranes, sees this festival taking a new focus each year. I will be suggesting a festival honoring the women! All of you know Jerry Jeff singing "Mr. Bo Jangles," Guy Clark singing about the LA Freeway, Ray Wylie did write "Redneck Mother" years ago, but is best known for his recent work including "Snake Farm" and "The Messenger." Willis Alan sings "Muskrat Love" and "North Texas Women," and that lineup is just Saturday! Tickets are a reasonable \$40 for two days and \$25/day. Tommy has created a special membership that includes the VIP party, hospitality rooms and lots of good perks! Worth being a sponsor this first year.

THMF NEWS:

Art Crawford, of Art and Lisa fame, is joining the THMF board this year. Plans are firm for the September 30 Texas Heritage Music Day. One new aspect of the event is two songwriting workshops at the Union Church during the morning. Sign up required. Volunteers are needed to spread the word to schools, distribute posters throughout the Hill Country, coordinate sponsorships to that everyone can attend this free event. Another way of learning using stories and songs. See www.texasheritagemusic.org for details on the organization.

Had a great time at Toucan Jim's in Center Point. What a creative space for music, art, writing, reflecting as well as eating and drinking. Held my last creative writing class there. Jim told his story, one of passion pursued! I also attended the packed open house weekend where musicians took the stage throughout the afternoon and evening. Have to see it to believe it.

Jeff Gavin of Cabin 10 Productions has a series of great music at **Fischer Hall**, camping available. Keith and Gretchen Asbury bring music to the west of Kerrville with weekly Sunday dances featuring Jr. Pruneda and Western Swing. Historical and entertaining! His website at **Roddy Tree Ranch** shows the summer lineup. I went to a Thursday evening with Claude Butch Morgan (yes, I do remember "The Blast") and Jon Brooks, an intense Canadian folksinger and New Folk Award recipient. Claude, from Devine, has a new cd, a new one coming out, and performs all over the Hill Country. He is a time-worn tradition in the world of Texas music, telling his stories! An evening with him is always an evening of fun. I was also in good company with a new friend, a writer!

Jon's songs were serious for the most part. My favorite lines and quotes were: "In the alleys and in love, there is the truth." "Does your heart know the way home from Kigali?" "To know him I had to become him." Kigali is the capitol of Rowanda, and the song is a layer of metaphors for me! Jon was once working on a novel, and his literary interests show through. One long song of paradoxes said, "If we keep what's within us, what's within us will kill us." Jon will be playing the Kerrville Folk Festival on Tuesday June 7

showcase of New Folk winners. Another favorite of mine plays that night, Nathan Hamilton.

I bring this road trip to an end by reminding you to check my weekly show at www.the-hill-country-calendar.tv for updates and stories. I recently asked Harold Eggers, road manager and lifelong friend of Townes Van Zandt, to send me a poem he wrote on the inspiration found knowing these Texas treasure.

Tears of Townes

I find myself/crying each day/As did Townes/back in the day/For those without/I pray; He showed/me the way/of lost souls/found hearts/I pray/one day/will be one.

Lost his mind/it's true/ in pursuit/ of truth/in pain.

He came back/from darkness/ to say/hold on/to Love/ and kindness/each day/'Til/you fade away.

And now /I can/go in peace

today.

(/ indicates line break in original format)

Harold F. Eggers Jr., c2011

See you down the road. Ils sont partis. kh