International Country Music Journal 2018

Don Cusic, Editor

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Town Hall Party: West Coast Country Music History of a Radio and Television Show

By Dave Sichak

The Town Hall Party show has raised some interesting debates as to determining who was a part of the show. The truth of the matter, there were two or shall we say three iterations Town Hall Party shows. In some discussions it was actually a debate as to whether a member of the band could be considered for an award as the debate was centered on the televised version. Perhaps the earliest version on the television show was on the Screen Gems offering called Ranch Party that survives today in video form.

Johnny Bond provided some insight into the beginnings of the show in his book, The Tex Ritter Story." The original Town Hall Party show was started by Bert (Foreman) Phillips, who made a name promoting country dances at various venues in the Los Angeles area. One was the Town Hall Party at the old Town Hall Building in Compton, California. Mr. Phillips gradually wound down his barn dances until the Town Hall dance was the last one.

William B. Wagnon, Jr. was also a promoter, focusing on what Mr. Bond termed the "long valley" between Sacramento and Bakersfield. In 1945, Bill was partner in the Valley Amusement Company with the former manager of Bob Wills, H. H. McGee. They were booking Bob and the Texas Playboys for 12 dances in and around the Fresno area in August 1945. On September 13, Bob

had an appendicitis attack. He was treated with penicillin shots and was released but told to take it lightly until they could see how he reacted. At the time, Bob was doing daily radio shows over KMJ in Fresno at 6:30am. The shows were sponsored by Valley Amusement Company and the plan was to have Bob do transcriptions in the near future to allow them to get a bit more rest.

The Valley Amusement Company was in the news in Fresno in 1944. In December, the Public Works Commissioner of Fresno, Fred M. Ashley, had to tell the city commission that he had taken steps to keep the peace at the Fresno Memorial Auditorium, especially when they had 'name' band entertainment that attracted large crowds on Saturday nights. The trouble was caused mainly by "zoot suiters" and other disorderly persons. Mr. Ashley worked with the local police as well as the military police and the Valley Amusement Company agreed to station two additional uniformed policemen. It got to the point where the soft drink concession stand had to sell soda in paper cups so bottles could not be used as weapons. The zoot suiters would insult soldiers and were blamed for the drinking problems. It seems that their female companions would smuggle liquor into the hall in large handbags to avoid detection.

The "commercial dances" that were held on Saturday nights was also the subject of a city commission review of the rental rates for the auditorium after a local promoter, Herman J. Pieper, complained that the rates were too low and the popular dances "…had crippled his business". Mr. Pieper claimed that the name band attractions were earning as much as $4,000. The rental fee for that type of event was stated to be $500. Mr. Pieper thought one answer would be a prohibition of the dances but Mr. Ashley stated to do so would ignore the desire of the general public to attend a popular event. A proposal was made to allow the rental based on a percentage of the gross.

Around 1952, according to Johnny Bond's account, Mr. Wagnon took his business into the Los Angeles area. He purchased

the Town Hall lease from Mr. Phillips and began to put his own stamp on the Town Hall show. Mr. Phillips retired to his lumber operation in the Redding, California area.

The Town Hall building was located at 400 South Long Beach Boulevard in Compton. In 2017, one can use Google Earth and it appears the building no longer exists and now a small strip mall center is at the location.

The first instance of "The Town Hall Party" was a radio show. The Town Hall Party went on the air in the fall of 1951. It was started by Foreman Phillips, who was quite successful promoting country music shows in the Los Angeles area. The show was put on at the "Town Hall" building located at 400 South Long Beach Boulevard in Compton, California.

It was first broadcast over radio station KXLA in Pasadena, California and aired from 9:00pm to 9:30pm on Friday nights. On Saturdays, it was also on from 8:30pm to 9:30pm over the NBC network. A review of radio logs does not show it airing over KXLA. However, after further digging, it appears that local newspapers were not listing any of the programs aired over KXLA in the fall of 1951. Both The *Los Angeles Times* and the *Long Beach Independent* showed KXLA in their list of stations (1110 on the AM dial), but listings did not show any programs on KXLA!

The show then moved to radio station KFI and was broadcast at 8:00pm on Saturday nights for a half-hour. Over time, it moved as the radio station changed its programming.

The Town Hall Party drew in excess of 2,800 paid admissions each Friday and Saturday and the attendance records they set are interesting because they charged more than other shows for admission.

The show was more than just the artists on stage entertaining the audience. The theater sat about 1,000 folks in front of the stage but, at the same time, about another 1,200 or so were dancing in the rear of the huge ballroom.

Town Hall Party
(Photo negative labelled "before television")
At microphone - Eddie Kirk
On Guitar - Dick Hamilton
On Steel Guitar - Leode Jackson
Circa early 1950s

From the Hillbilly-Music.com collection

Town Hall Party
(Photo negative labelled "before television")
Circa early 1950s

From the Hillbilly-Music.com collection

Occasionally, newspapers listed the guests appearing on the KFI broadcasts. For example, on May 3, 1952, Eddie Kirk and his band provided the musical backing for Dude Martin, Sue Thompson, Eddie Dean, Les (Carrot Top) Anderson, Wesley Tuttle, Karen O'Hara and the Pine Ridge Sisters. On April 11, 1953 it was "Oklahoma Night" and they featured Jimmy Wakely.

In 1952, Eddie Kirk had a seven piece band. He did the Town Hall Party broadcast, but also was the disc jockey on KXLA for a half-hour show, "Harmony Hoedown." Prior to his gig at Town Hall, he spent six years starring in Cliffie Stone's Hometown Jamboree. Eddie's band members included Karen O'Hara (female vocalist), Billy Hill, fiddle, Sam Leichter, fiddle, Jimmy Pruett, blind piano player, Dick Hamilton, guitar and Joe Cozzo, accordion.

In July of 1953, KFI made programming changes. They started airing The Tex Ritter Show at 7:30p.m. that featured Tex playing recordings from his personal collection. That meant the Grand Ole Opry, Town Hall Party and New Talent USA were to be on 30 minutes later than usual. A couple of weeks later, KFI added The Tex Williams Show from Knots Berry Farm, preceding the Tex's show.

The show became popular and consistently sold out so a separate Friday evening show was put on to accommodate the audience. KFI and KTTV programmers told Mr. Wagnon that in order to attract bigger and better sponsors, the show needed a big name star to be the face of the show. Tex Ritter came to mind because he was popular in the Hollywood area and a well-known singing cowboy movie. Johnny Bond stated that in December 1953, he became the writer of both the radio and television shows, with assistance from Wesley Tuttle.

Town Hall Party
View from bandstand
At microphone - Eddie Kirk
Circa early 1950s

From the Hillbilly-Music.com collection

Town Hall Party
View from bandstand
At microphone - Charlie Aldrich
Polka Dot Shirt - Red Murrell(?)
Circa early 1950s

From the Hillbilly-Music.com collection

The show continued to grow. At one time, a Sunday show was added to an outdoor venue called Sierra Creek Park in the Santa Monica mountains. KCOP-TV (channel 13) added a two hour show daily from 4:00pm to 6:00pm. Mr. Bond tells readers that the Armed Forces TV service started to broadcast the show over their overseas outlets. Columbia Records tried to ride the popularity of the show by releasing an LP that featured the entire cast.

Some of the cast members the show had during its time include Tex Ritter, Tex Williams, Fiddlin' Kate, The Collins Kids, Rose Lee and Joe Maphis, Johnny Bond, Freddie Hart, Wesley and Marilyn Tuttle, Merle Travis, Les "Carrot Top" Anderson and Texas Tiny.

Tuning in on the Air Waves

RADIO

SATURDAY P. M.

5:00 P. M.
KLAC—News, Balter, Norman
KFI—From Dixie
KMPC—Serenade
KECA—Marines in Review
KNX—Tom Harmon
KHJ—Pentagon
KFWB—Red Rowe
KFAC—Sunset Serenade
5:15
KHJ—Serenade
KNX—World Today
5:30
KFI—Reuben, Reuben
KHJ—Al Helfer
KECA—Bob Garred
KNX—Tom Hanlon
KFAC—Memories
5:45
KLAC—Sam Balter
KHJ—Music
KECA—Stewart Craig
KNX—Frank Goss
6:00 P. M.
KLAC-KFWB—News
KMPC—News
KFI—Symphony Orch.
KHJ—Hawaii Calls
KECA—Music

KECA—Report to People
KFAC—Waltz Time
7:00 P. M.
KLAC—News, McL'ghlin
KFI—Dude Ranch
KMPC—Jr. Meeting
KECA—Your Business
KNX—Vaughn Monroe
KHJ—College Choir
7:30
KFI—Grand Old Opry
KMPC—Our America
KECA—Heritage
KHJ—Lombardoland
KFWB—Lundy Roar's
KNX—Bdwy. My Beat
KFAC—Baptist Church
7:45
KFWB—Rosary Hour
8:00 P. M.
KLAC—News, Balter
KFI—Town Hall Party
KMPC—Amer. Legion
KECA—Dance Party
KNX—Gunsmoke
KFWB—Ken Killing
KHJ—M-G-M Musical
KFAC—Concert
8:15
KLAC—Gene Norman
KMPC—St. Francis Hr.
8:30
KLAC—Basketball—U.S.C.-Utah
KECA—Newsstand Thtr.
KNX—Gene Autry

KECA—Layman's Hour
KNX—I Was a Communist
10:00 P. M.
KLAC—News, G. Norm'n
KFI—News
KMPC—Dance Time
KHJ—Monica Whalen
KFWB—Larry Finley
KNX—10 o'Clock Wire
KFAC—Music Crossroads
10:15
KECA—Sammy Kaye
KFI—Supervisor's Rpt.
KHJ—Dance Time
KNX—Kennedy, George Gallup
10:30
KFI—Orchestra
KECA—Lawrence Welk
KHJ—Orchestra
KNX—F. Norman
11:00 P. M.
KLAC—News, G. Norm'n
KFI—Records
KECA—Play Boys
KHJ—News
KMPC—Dance Time
KFWB—Larry Finley
KNX—News, Sports
11:15
KFI—Palladium
KECA—3 Dons
KNX—Chas. Antell
KHJ—Crowell's Nest

Radio Log
Oxnard Press Courier
Saturday - December 13, 1952

Television Schedule

TELEVISION
Monday, Dec. 15
5:00 P. M.
KNXT (2)—Tim McCoy
KNBH (4)—Film
KTLA (5)—Playcrafters
KECA (7)—Al Jarvis
KFMB (8)—Ind. Parade
KHJ (9)—G. Norman
KTTV (11)—Film
KLAC (13)—Webfoot
5:15
KNBH (4)—Jump, Jump
5:30
KNBH (4)—Howdy Doody
KTLA (5)—Cowboy Thrills
KECA (7)—Jack Rourke
KFMB (8)—Magic Shop
KTTV (11)—Cartoon
KLAC (13)—Televenture
6:00 P. M.
KNBH (4)—Pinut Circus
KECA (7)—News
KHJ (9)—"Alias John Law"
6:15
KECA (7)—Jack Owens
KTTV (11)—Welsh at Airport
6:30
KNXT (2)—News
KNBH (4)—Komedy Kl'b
KTLA (5)—Beany
KFMB (8)—Beany

Sea
KTLA (5)—News
KECA (7)—Cisco Kid
KFMB (8)—Kaleidoscope
KHJ (9)—News
KTTV (11)—Town Hall Party
KLAC (13)—"Strange Impersonation"
7:15
KTLA (5)—Film
KHJ (9)—Movie Quiz
7:30
KNBH (4)—Those Two
KTLA (5)—At Ease
KECA (7)—Kit Carson
KFMB (8)—News
KHJ—What's the Name of That Song
KTTV (11)—March of Time
7:45
KNBH (4)—News
8:00 P. M.
KNXT (2)—Harry Owens
KTLA (5)—Showboat
KECA (7)—You Asked for It
KFMB (8)—Gross Stars
KHJ (9)—News
KTTV (11)—Town Hall Party
8:15
KHJ (9)—Boxing
8:30
KNXT (2)—Video Thtr.
KNBH (4)—Voice of Firestone

KFMB (8)—"Fabulous Suzanne"
9:30
KNXT (2)—Life w/Luigi
KNBH (4)—R. Montgomery Presents
KECA (7)—"Circumstantial Evidence"
10:00 P. M.
KNXT (2)—TV News
KTLA (5)—Telecrum
KECA (7)—News
10:15
KECA (7)—Jack Rourke
KLAC (13)—"Without Honor"
10:30
KNXT (2)—Chronoscope
KNBH (4)—Mon. Quarterbacks
KFMB (8)—Studio One
KHJ (9)—News
10:45
KECA (7)—"Theirs the Glory"
KNXT (2)—Circ's
KHJ (9)—Star Time
KTTV (11)—Locker Rm.
KNBH (4)—News
KTLA (5)—Final Edition
11:00 P. M.
KNXT (2)—"King Kelly"
KFMB (8)—Theater
KTTV (11)—News
11:15
KNBH (4)—"Shamrock Hill"

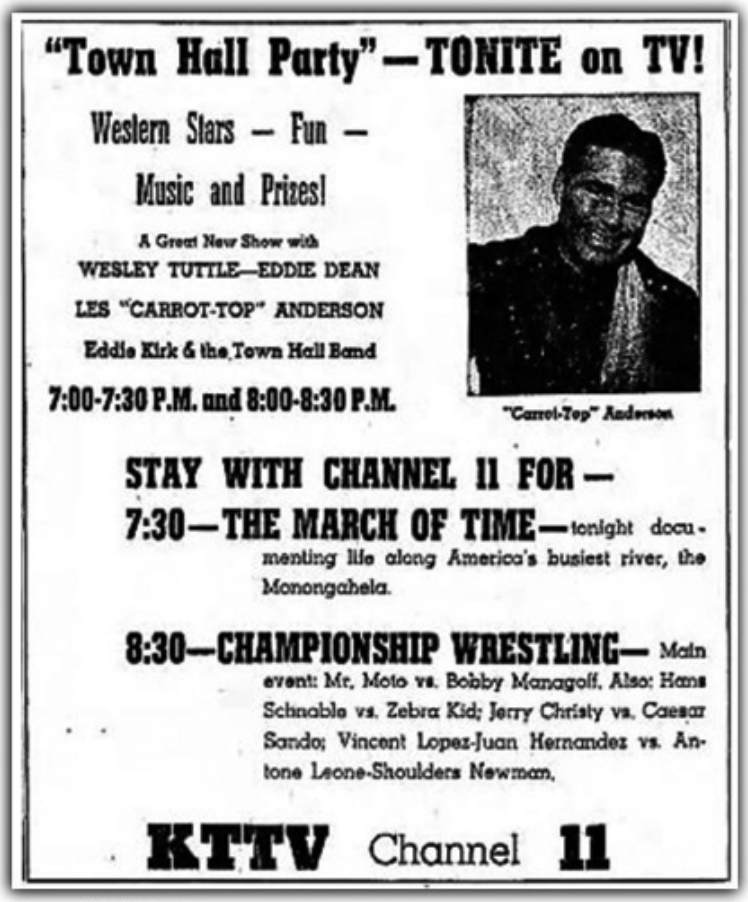
Television Log
Oxnard Press Courier
Monday - December 15, 1952

In 1954, t Eddie Kirk's new band was called "Hollywood Caravan" and included Eddie Downs, a 15-year old singer.

On Monday, December 1, 1952, the "Town Hall Party" television show was first broadcast over KTTV (Channel 11) in Los Angeles. There were to be two segments of a half-hour sandwiched between a broadcast of the "March of Time" show on KTTV.

Two articles, one by King Charles in his "Looking and Listening" column in the *Long Beach Telegram* and the other by Terry Vernon in his "Tele-Vues" column in the *Independent* of Long Beach wrote similar stories of the show's debut that night.

The stars of the show were Eddie Dean, Les (Carrot Top) Anderson, Wesley Tuttle, Eddie Kirk and Patty Woods. Jimmy Pruett, noted guitarist, had joined Eddie's band. He had worked on recordings for some of the cast as well.



Town Hall Party
Television Show Premier
December 1, 1952
KTTV Promotional Ad
Los Angeles Times

The first half-hour show was at 7:00-7:30pm. Then the KTTV show "March of Time" aired. The second half-hour aired from 8:00-8:30pm. There was a ploy behind having two segments. The first half-hour portion was the start of a "send-out" stunt and in the second half-hour, they awarded prizes. The studio audience would be held over for games and entertainment. The show bumped the "How Did We Meet?" program to Friday nights.

Slim Dossey decided to leave Seattle, Washington in January 1953 for Southern California. He contacted Bill Wagnon who had him do a guest appearance on the Town Hall Party. He won over the audience and before long was a part of the band. Slim later accepted an offer from Smokey Rogers to appear on his show over KFMB-TV in San Diego. However, this first attempt at a television show ran into some hiccups. On March 2, 1953, two newspaper reported the program's financial strains. The show would only be a half-hour that night and, unless a sponsor was found, this would be the last show.

Town Hall Party Television Show: The Long Run

The televised version of **Town Hall Party** was off the air until a small article on August 29, 1953 told readers that KTTV (Channel 11 in Los Angeles) was going to debut *"...the greatest array of western talent ever assembled on any one platform for a TV series..."* at 10:30pm. The show would be two hours long and was airing from the same 400 South Long Beach Boulevard address in Compton. The lineup on that first show was to be Tex Ritter, Les (Carrot Top) Anderson, Wesley and Marilyn Tuttle, Jack Lloyd, Joe Maphis, Rose Lee Maphis and Texas Tiny (a disc jockey at KFOX who had a three hour a day show). Tex Williams and his band were to provide the musical backing for performers. Jay Stewart was to be the announcer. The article mentioned *"... Show is a TV version of the old favorite KFI show."*

Les "Carrot Top" Anderson did a "West Coast Ramblings" column each month for *Country Song Roundup* for a few months between August and December 1953. He told readers some details about the Town Hall Party, including who was in the cast. In the August issue he wrote that Eddie Kirk's band was handling the musical chores for a cast that included himself, Wesley Tuttle, Eddie Dean, Joe and Rose Lee Maphis along with two newcomers, Teenie

and Nelda, known as The Southern Belles. He said the show was known as the "dance of dances". The December issue confirmed the addition of Tex Ritter to the show. Other additions to the cast were Marilyn Tuttle, Texas Tiny, Jack Loyd and Jay Stewart was now handling the announcing chores. Les was pretty busy; he also worked the Jack MacElroy show on Channel 4 every day at 4:00p.m. At the same time, the Town Hall Party radio show was also aired over KFI at 8:30 p,m. This is an example of both the radio and television versions of the show being on the air concurrently.

The Town Hall Party radio show was at times aired twice a week. On Friday night, September 18, 1953, the show aired for a half-hour over KFI at 9:00 p.m. On Saturday night, September 19, the show aired at 8:30 p.m. and ran until 9:30pm when it was followed by Spade Cooley's show.

RADIO

KLAC-570 KECA-790 KFOX-1280
KFI-640 KHJ-930 KFAC-1330
KMPC-710 KFWB-980 KGER-1390
KBIG-740 KNX-1070 KVOE-1480
FM KLON-88.1 KFOX-102.3 KNOB-103.1

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1953

4:00 P. M.
5:00 P. M.
6:00 P. M.
7:00 P. M.
8:00 P. M.
9:00 P. M.
10:00 P. M.
11:00 P. M.
12:00 MIDNIGHT

TV

KNXT Channel 2 KECA Channel 7
KNBH Channel 4 KHJ Channel 9
KTLA Channel 5 KTTV Channel 11
KLAC Channel 13

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1953

4:00 P. M.
5:00 P. M.
6:00 P. M.
7:00 P. M.
8:00 P. M.
9:00 P. M.
10:00 P. M.
11:00 P. M.
12:00 MIDNIGHT

Radio and TV Logs
Town Hall Party on KFI Radio and KTTV (Channel 11)
Saturday - November 21, 1953
Long Beach Press Telegram

On December 12, 1953, the show celebrated it's second anniversary and featured guest stars Sue Thompson and Hank Penny.

Around the December 1953 time frame Tex Ritter and Johnny Bond became a part of the show. Their friendship led them to become partners in the formation of a publishing company. Tex had started his own publishing company, Tex Ritter Music Co., Inc. in conjunction with his Capitol Records connection where Johnny Bond had his own Red River Songs, Inc. publishing company. They realized that they might be able to capitalize on the songwriters and recording artists they were came into contact with doing the Town Hall Party show. They approached Bill Wagnon with the idea and he liked it. They named it after their wives; Bill's wife's name was Veva (but Johnny thought it was "Viva") and Dorothy was the name of both Johnny and Tex's wives, so Vidor (pronounced Vee-dor) Publications, Inc. was born.

They found office space at 5927 Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. In that building, there was a "Huksters Restaurant" on the ground level while other vacant rooms that could be used for rehearsals. Upstairs, they had several vacant offices and even a small theater. The office space was needed for Vidor and the rapidly growing Town Hall operations. Tex's niece, Jane Deren, was hired as secretary and worked out of a small reception room. Mr. Wagnon had an office while Tex and Johnny shared an adjacent office together.

Tex and Johnny began to discuss the desire to get a hit song into their catalog. Tex mentioned he had been carrying around a song for a couple years on an old acetate. The song was called "The Legend of the Alamo" and was written by Jane Bowers of Austin, Texas. Tex and Johnny thought it might sell better if it was renamed "Remember the Alamo" and Ms. Bowers agreed to the suggestion and assigned the song to Vidor. Both Tex and Johnny

recorded it and Warner Brothers had Tex include it in a movie called *Down Liberty Road*. That became their first hit song and inspired other members of the Town Hall Party cast to write and record songs for the Vidor catalog.

The daily routine at the office involved having the show cast members show up around 12:30, then go to the restaurant downstairs where Tex was usually surrounded by patrons wanting autographs and of course some conversation, which delayed their work efforts. Eventually, the gang learned to take snacks back up to their offices.

The publishing company grew to the point that it could support them. One interesting tidbit Mr. Bond indicated was that Alton and Rabon Delmore sought their help in resolving some difficulties with their current publishers. Eventually the Vidor catalog included some Delmore Brothers classics such as "Beautiful Brown Eyes", "Brown's Ferry Blues", and, "Blues Stay Away From Me". "Hominy Grits" by Smiley Burnette was in their catalog. All of Tommy Duncan's compositions were willed to Vidor as well.

A seasonal theme for a show around Christmas was developed and local disc jockey Texas Tiny, took on the role of Santa Claus. Promises were made that no reindeer would be used to pull him around (he was not tiny). The songs on the show were seasonal and with an emphasis on novelty types. The show closes would the traditional hymn/tune, *"Silent Night"*.

December of 1953 saw recognition for a member of the Town Hall Party cast. Margie Warren, better known as Fiddlin' Kate, was named "Miss Hoedown" of 1954 by Thurston Moore's *Hillbilly & Western Hoedown* magazine. The article stated she was known for her "stunning suede cowgirl outfits" as well as her fiddling talents.

On December 26, 1953, the TV show moved to the 10:00pm slot and Stuart Hamblen's shows were dropped.

On Saturday, January 2, 1954, the radio show was broadcast at 8:00pm for an hour. Terry Vernon in his "Tele-Vues" newspaper column reported was that the TV version was growing into *"… quite a shindig."* The show expanded to three hours; Johnny Bond and Louise O'Brien were now a part of the show.

In 1954, research found that guest stars on the show were starting to show up more frequently in the local Long Beach newspapers. Stars such as Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, Rex Allen, Sons of the Pioneers, Hank Thompson and his Brazos Valley Boys, Grandpa Jones were among those mentioned in that newspaper.

Town Hall Party
Personal Appearance Ad
Palomino Grand Opening
Valley News (Van Nuys, CA)
October 24, 1957

An interesting aspect of this show was its tendency to showcase young talent and not necessarily country music oriented. In 1954, eight-year old Patti Kent made appearances on not only the Town Hall Party but also Squeakin' Deacon Moore's show on KXLA, as well as appearances with the Charlie Aldrich and Doye O'Dell shows. An article stated that her first recording, "Mexicali Rose," was done when she was 22 months old and she made her stage debut at the age of three!

Another unique act was Nancy Wible and her "Candy," a mannequin/puppet of sorts.

Female vocalist Patti Woods, 18, was from West Virginia and made a name for herself imitating Clyde McCoy playing the trumpet with her hand and mouth on the tune *"Sugar Blues.* She heard of an opening for a female vocalist on the Town Hall Party and contacted producer Bill Wagnon, who auditioned her with Eddie Kirk. She was hired and appeared on both the radio and televised editions of the show.

In 1954, Eddie Kirk was the face / leader of Town Hall Party. Eddie Dean was the subject of an "On The Spot" interview in *Country Song Roundup*. He was asked what his current activities included and responded that he was "featured vocalist with Eddie Kirk's Town Hall Party... in Compton, California."

Johnny Bond, wrote for the show, Wesley Tuttle was the show's musical director and the show's producer was Bill Wagnon. In a 1954 article, Wesley Tuttle stated, "Each show has a theme and we give the theme of the following week's show to our cast on Friday. They tell us the numbers they would like to do. On Monday, Johnny and I get together and routine the musical portion of the show. Then, Johnny takes the material to his office and writes the script." Bond added, "I try to keep down the talk and make the songs and artists the main feature. Aside from the dialogue introducing the artists and their songs, we have two talk spots on

the show. These are comedy spots handled by Merle Travis, Texas Tiny and myself, with Merle [Travis], Tex Williams, Tex Ritter and myself alternating as straight man for Tiny."

Johnny finished the scripts for the show on Wednesday, then there was a meeting between Johnny, Wes and Bill Wagnon to discuss the radio and TV scripts before they were turned into the network and station script departments.

Thursdays were their day off. On Fridays rehearsals were at 7:00pm and went for about an hour while Johnny timed the script and Wes timed the music. On Saturdays, they ran through rehearsal around 5:00pm.

Each show had a theme. Some of the themes include "Hank Williams Night," "State Nights," "Veteran's Nights" and "Jimmie Rodgers Night."

The emcee of the show was Jay Stewart and Tex Williams led a ten-piece Town Hall band, which included Billy Hill and Fiddlin' Kate.

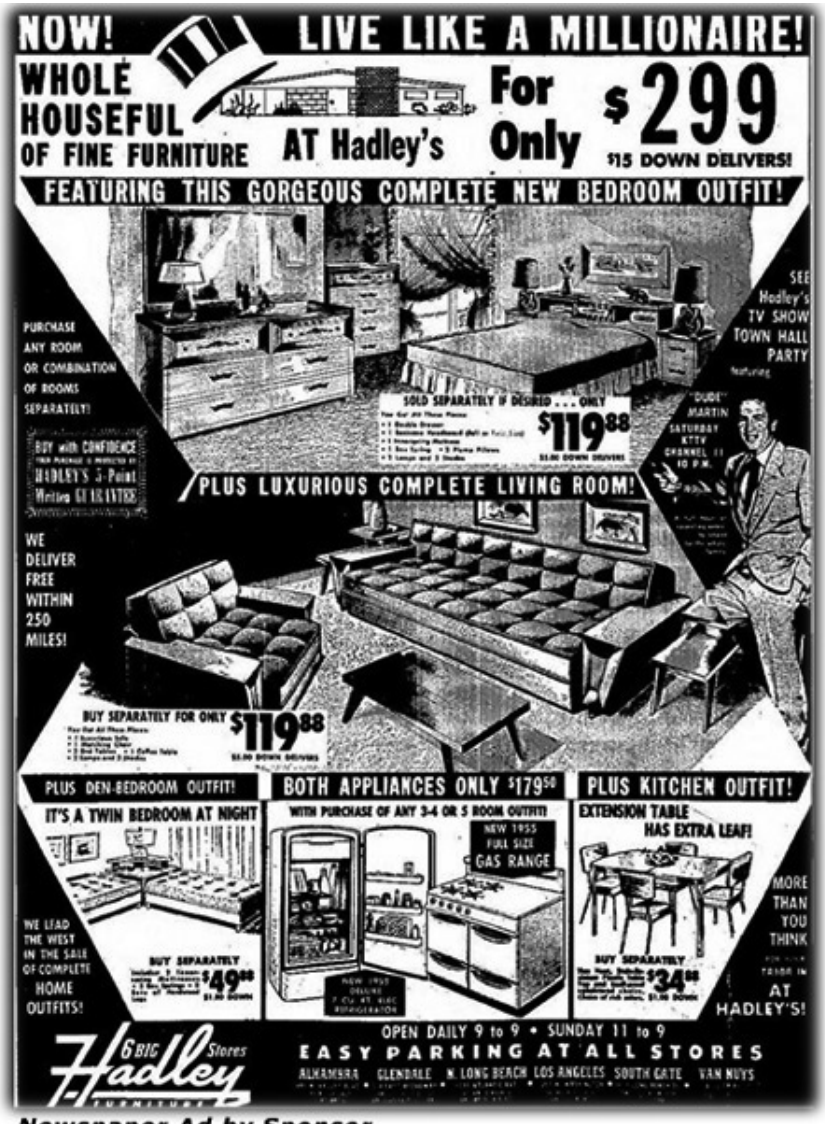
Town Hall Party
Personal Appearance Ad
Silver Spur
Fontana, CA
San Bernardino County Sun
October 25, 1957

In January, 1955, a new country music show, "The Ozark Jubilee, was starting in Columbia, Missouri. It was hosted by Red Foley on the ABC television network. His initial cast included Jean Shepard, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Arlie Duff, Tommy Sosebee, the Oklahoma Wranglers, Grady Martin, the Foggy River Boys and Porter Wagoner with Pete Stamper doing comedy. That same night, Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys were on KFI and the Town Hall Party.

January, 1955, also saw the Town Hall Party radio show making waves. Its Saturday night 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. show had the first half-hour broadcast over the NBC network while the second half-hour was broadcast only on the NBC stations on the west coast. A *Billboard* blurb reported that the cast members at that time which included Tex Ritter, Merle Travis, Wesley Tuttle, Johnny Bond, Joe and Rose Lee Maphis, the Rangers Quartet, Mary Lou (Johnson), Betsy Gay, Freddie Hart and others. The show was directed by Wesley Tuttle, written by Johnny Bond and managed by William Wagnon.

In May 1955, a large newspaper ad for Hadley's Furniture stores plugged the Town Hall Party and mentioned Dude Martin. Hadley's had stores in Alhambra, Glendale, North Long Beach, Los Angeles, South Gate and Van Nuys. In some of the video clips of the show on YouTube, the Hadley's logo can be seen on the backdrop behind the drummer. Other sponsors mentioned in newspaper ads were Rheingold and Howell Chevrolet.

In June, 1955, the radio show finished its season on KFI and then moved to Sierra Creek (or View?) Park and did three shows a day on Sunday for park visitors. It seems that KFI may have broadcast those shows since radio listings on KFI show broadcasts on Saturdays at 8:00 p.m. during the following weeks. During the last few months of 1955, the KFI show did not turn up in searches and did not appear on the Saturday night radio logs. The time slot where Town Hall Party broadcast who artists such as Tex Ritter or Merle Travis listed. The last listing was probably August 20, 1955.



Newspaper Ad by Sponsor
of Town Hall Party
Hadley's
Dude Martin spotlighted
May 24, 1955
Long Beach Press Telegram

Town Hall Party
Personal Appearance Ad
40th Street Corral
San Bernardino, CA
San Bernardino County Sun
June 21, 1958

Dude Martin had a successful career in the San Francisco area with the Hoffman Hayride, which did on-location broadcasts for Hoffman Television, the show's sponsor. In November, 1955 in Los Angeles, the show did an on-location broadcast of the opening of a new Hadley's store. The public was invited to watch the broadcast. Several cast members, including Dude Martin, Johnny Bond, Fiddlin' Kate, Mary Jane Johnson and Texas Tiny, were there. The new store's location was at 1334 Los Alamitos Avenue in Long Beach and the furniture received publicity with stunts such as having Texas Tiny testing a new sofa.

In July, 1956, the *Corona Daily Independent* reported that Larry Collins, the 11-year old brother of Lorrie Collins, would host his own show, **"**Western Spectacular,**"** on KTTV.

The Town Hall's popularity grew and reporter Walter Ames with the *Los Angeles Times* wrote in the August 8, 1956 edition that the show would soon be filmed for national distribution. Ames reported that Bill Wagnon, Jr. and Mitch Hamilburg had formed "Town Hall TV Productions" and planned to do a half hour show where each show featured eight top recording stars. In his book

Johnny Bond stated that Screen Gems planned to film 39 half-hour episodes at the Linkletter Playhouse at 1228 Vine Street in Hollywood. Art Linkletter used the theater for his television show and Steve Allen also used it for his show.

On November 10, 1956. Walter Ames reported in the *L.A. Times* that KTTV was going to interrupt the Town Hall Party that eveing after the first hour (from 10:00-11:00 p.m.) to broadcast a special Christmas show benefiting the local Community Chest hosted by Art Linkletter. The second half fo Town Hall Party aired from midnight to 1:00 a.m. In the article, Bill Wagnon, Jr., producer of the Town Hall Party stated, *"Western or country music is the stepchild of Madison Ave. advertising executives. They don't like it but they're coming to realize that it sells their products for them. They've been overlooking the fact that country music record sales are at an all-time high these days."*

Town Hall Party
Personal Appearance Ad
The Big Fresno Barn
Fresno, CA
Fresno Bee
December 6, 1957

Mr. Ames noted that there was always a steady stream of artists on the show. That particular night, the show featured Grand Ole Opry stars Carl Smith, Cowboy Copas, Arlie Duff, The Farmer Boys, Tommy Collins and Ken Marvin. He also noted that two of Mr. Wagnon's protégés, Larry and Lorrie Collins had returned from their eastern tour where they "wowed the natives."

In November, 1957, the Star-News was reported a "bigger and better" Town Hall Party. Tex Williams, Spade Cooley and Doye O'Dell would rotate as emcees during the Saturday night three hour broadcast. *Billboard* reported that the new three hour format began on November 23. Jay Stewart and KXLA D.J. Charlie Williams handled the intermissions. The article stated that the cast included Mac Wiseman, Bonnie Guitar, Merle Travis, Tex Ritter, The Collins Kids, Johnny Bond, Bobby Charles, Joe and Rose Lee Maphis, Johnny O'Neil, Les (Carrot Top) Anderson, Gee Nee Sterling, Johnny Western, Dortha Wright, Bonnie Sloan, Quincy Snodgrass and Wendy Hill. Fiddlin' Kate and Pee Wee Adams (drums) were the only old band members remaining. New members included Jelly Sanders on fiddle, Billy Mize on steel, Cliff Crawford (Crofford) on trumpet, Cousin Herb Henson on piano and Skeets McDonald playing bass.

Town Hall Party
Personal Appearance Ad
Builder's Emporium Grand Opening
Valley News (Van Nuys, CA)
August 21, 1958

In August, 1960, *Billboard* magazine reported that Lefty Frizzell and Freddie Hart were rejoining the cast of Town Hall Party on September 3; they had been off the show for the previous two years. The show celebrated its 8th anniversary on the August 27, 1960 show with a telecast that included Tex Williams, Jimmy Wakely, Tex Ritter, Joe Maphis and Merle Travis as well as Lefty and Freddie.

Terry Vernon in his "Looking and Listening" column in *The Long Beach Telegram* reported in the August 27, 1960 edition that Town Hall Party was going to celebrate its seventh birthday. That milestone would mark 1,092 hours of telecasts or, if we extend that to end the end of 1960, over 1,100 hours of television time. How does that compare to some other long-running popular television shows? Well, there were 271 "Perry Mason" episodes, 431 "Bonanza" episodes, 360 "Alfred Hitchcock" shows and 635 episodes of "Gunsmoke. To make it a somewhat fair comparison, divide the 1,100 hours by three hours and there are 367 three-hour episodes. We could not resist the urge to compare it to the long running "Hee-Haw!" series. One site on the internet stated ran for 25 seasons and was filmed twice a year where they did 13 shows each time. If we do the math, 25 times 26 equals 650 shows. But only 650 hours. If we calculate that the new television show that began as a two hour show then became a three hour show, began in the fall of 1953 and ran consecutively until the end of 1960, that is about 378 shows. We noted previously that attendance could be 2,800. Let's say they averaged 2,500 per show; that is over 945,000 people who saw the show in person in Compton. If every show was attended by 2,800, then the math shows 1,058,400 people attended the show. In a February, 1957, *Billboard* article touting that Screen Gems would produce a new show, Western Ranch Party, that article also noted that Town Hall Party attendance on Saturday nights was 3,000 and the price of admission was $1.50.

In October, 1960, *Billboard* stated that the cast of the Town Hall Party included Lefty Frizzell, Freddie Hart, Johnny Bond, Joe and Rose Lee Maphis, Johnny O'Neill, Skeets McDonald, Fiddlin' Kate, Billy Mize, Cliff Crofford, Big Jim Denoon, Barbara Mandrell, Bonnie Sloan, Gee Nee Sterling, Quincy Snodgrass, Salty Holmes and Jay Stewart. The Halloween themed show on October 29, featured "spooks and goblins" with Tex Ritter as special guest. Other performers scheduled for the broadcast included Pee Wee Adams, Jimmy Pruett, and, Pat O'Neill.

The November 5, 1960 show had the theme of an "Aloha Party" and Joe and Rose Lee Maphis and Fiddlin' Kate were going to the Armed Forces installations in Hawaii on November 9.

Johnny Bond wrote about some of the factors that led to the demise of Town Hall Party. First, TV as a novelty had worn off; the show's television ratings had dropped to a point near zero. Two, KFI and NBC had aired the remote broadcasts but professional baseball had moved from Brooklyn to Los Angeles with the Dodgers and played at the nearby Coliseum, which lured away the paying audience Town Hall Party had enjoyed.

The show was set to end at the end of 1960. The TV guide in the *Long Beach Independent-Press-Telegram* edition of Sunday December 25, 1960 indicated that the last show on December 31, 1960 would be a three-hour New Year's Eve celebration. However, that show may not have aired. The *Oxnard Press-Courier's* TV listing for Saturday, December 31, 1960 show that KTTV (channel 11) was airing a newscast at 10:00 p.m, followed by Paul Coates at 10:15, then weather and sports news until 11:00 p.m. with "Highway Patrol" wairing at 11:00 p.m.

Johnny Bond indicated that Mr. Wagnon may have inadvertently caused the demise of the show in Los Angeles. The Las Vegas Showboat hotel began booking big name acts on the show, including its star, Tex Ritter, leaving the rest of the

cast to try and hold the fort. The last show aired over KTTV on January 14, 1961.

After the Town Hall Party shut down, Mr. Wagnon sold his one third share in Vidor to Tex Ritter and Johnny Bond. Bond later lamented that Vidor never had that "biggie" hit but admitted they turned away Freddie Hart, Bobby Bare, Wynn Stewart, Buck Owens, Bonnie Owens, Harlan Howard, Jan Howard, Merle Haggard and Larry and Lorrie Collins.

In closing down operations, Wagnon told Tex and Johnny that he was giving up the offices on Sunset, which left them wondering what to do, but then Gene Autry bought the entire building to be the home of his newest endeavor, owner of the California Angels baseball club. Eventually, Autry had other ideas for the property and Tex and Johnny had to find a new base of operations.

In 2017, attempts were made to see what is now at 5927 Sunset Boulevard. Searching Google maps, we found an Arby's restaurant nearby, a new office building and another building one under construction.

The second iteration of the Town Hall Party television show over channel 11, KTTV, should be noted for its longevity. Town Hall Party was a broadcast live every week during its run, as far as we can tell. It was interesting in reviewing television listings to see what other channels were pitted against the show at its 10:00 p.m. slot. The year 1954 saw shows such as "You're Never Too Old," a Harry Owens show, George Goebel and a show starring Henry Fonda called "A Star and a Story". In 1955, stations pitted George Goebel's show along with movies or even a show by the Ames Brothers. In 1956, shows such as Gunsmoke, George Goebel, Encore Theater, The Late Curtain and The Falcon were scheduled against the show. In 1957 the competition got stiffer as the Ozark Jubilee starring Red Foley and George Goebele's show were scheduled at the same time. We also saw the Mike Wallace

Interview show on the listings. Television listings in 1958 saw the Sammy Kaye show, Ted Mack's Amateur Hour, Mike Wallace Interview show and movies in the same time slot. In 1959, Red Foley's Jubilee USA was in the same time slot. You wonder if the networks wanted to divide the audiences of the shows at the expense of possibly losing both shows. In 1959 the Sammy Kaye show was in the same slot as well as several nights of the Billy Graham Crusade from Australia. Jubilee USA continued to be in the same time slot in 1960 along with new shows such as Music For A Summer Night or Let's Dance with Al Jarvis.

Loose Ends

During the research efforts for Town Hall Party, we found other items of interest. For example, one cast member was GeeNee Sterling (yes, she admitted to spelling her name that way as a form of standing out a bit). She went through a divorce and in 1964, married Bobby Bare and they moved to Nashville. Some of the cast began appearing in Las Vegas. A February, 1964, article in the *Reno Gazette-Journal* told readers that GeeNee she was the former "Sloughfoot Sue" appearing at the Pepsi Cola House in Disneyland in Anaheim, California. She was also appearing at the Holiday Hotel's Theater Lounge as part of the Bobby Bare troupe. She had also previously appeared at the Mapes and Riverside Hotels in Reno prior to that engagement. GeeNee also appeared at the Wagon Wheel at Lake Tahoe as well as the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. The article indicated she was born in Long Beach, California and her dad was on the police force. She made her debut as an entertainer while a freshman in high school. She had auditioned for the Town Hall Party and stayed with the show for three years.

The female duo the Southern Belles was the sister team of Nelda (Ned) Fairchild and her sister Teena (Ella) Fairchild. Nelda

was a songwriter and had a few tunes recorded. She divorced her first husband, Jack Farnsworth, and in 1950 married Richard Bingo. She performed under the name "Sunny Bingo." She passed away in 2015.

Another female duo was the Harmony Sweethearts. In 1954, they were Norma Palm and Linda Robinson from the state of Washington. Linda later quit the music business but Norma kept at it for a time under the name of Norma Lee. Her name is Norma Davis now and indicated she has nothing but fond memories of the show. She related that she and Linda would get dressed up at their home for the shows and recalled it being very crowded in the little back stage area. She now enjoys showing the videos of the show to her grand and great grandchildren.

The research saw the comings and goings and life events as well. Betsy Gay, a yodeler, married Tom Cashen while on the show and gave birth to twins. Betsy started in Hollywood as the girlfriend of Alfalfa in the Little Rascals series.

Joe and Rose Lee Maphis also experienced the birth of a child during the run of the show. We also saw performers announced as performing at the local churches.

Country music Hall of Famer Whispering Bill Anderson told us that he could have been a member of the cast sometime in 1960 after he made several appearances on the show but he could not recall much in the way of details. He indicated it was very tempting because the pay was quite a bit more than what the Grand Ole Opry offered at the time but he chose not to and said he would someday provide the reason. Imagine if Bill had stayed on the west coast; how would the west coast sound have influenced Bill's music?

Attempts were made to determine William Wagnon, Jr.'s date of birth and death. It appears he was born on March 27, 1913 and information we found indicates he died in May of 1986, but have not been successful in finding an obituary. He married Veva Bell

Davis, who was born in Oklahoma in 1921 and died in May of 1982. We did not find any obituary for her either but did find that in 1954 they lived at 408 S Chester Avenue.

Tex Ritter passed away on January 2, 1974. There was a service in Nashville and his body was then flown to Texas where he was buried in his home town of Nederland. The State of Tennessee arranged a special flight for Tex and the pallbearers. On the plane were George Richey, Johnny Bond, Joe Allison, Ralph Emery, Fowler Hollobaugh, Jr., and Mark Clark Bates. Mr. Bond indicated they were joined in Texas by Tom T. Hall, Jay Stewart and Tex's nephew, Kenneth Ritter, who was the mayor of Beaumont.

One interesting article showed how quickly things change in show business and how folks sometimes let bygones be bygones. The *Los Angeles Times* reported on September 19, 1949, that Tex Ritter was suing William B. Wagnon, Jr. for $14,500. The contract called for Tex to appear in a show between June 6 and July 6, 1947. In the suit, which was filed in Superior Court, Tex claimed he was promised $7,500 but was only paid $500. He wanted $7,000 as the remainder of the payment in their contract and an additional $7,500 per a punitive provision of the California State Labor Code. We did not see any subsequent articles that announced the outcome of the suit but several years later Tex joined forces with Mr. Wagnon as part of the Town Hall Party and Ranch Party shows.

One of the show's long-time hosts of the television version was Jay Stewart. His real name was Jay Fix, the son of Julian Cleve Fix and Ressie Mae (Jenkins) Fix, and was originally from Indiana. He worked on radio stations WBOW in Terre Haute, Indiana and also the powerhouse WLW in Cincinnati, Ohio. He moved to Los Angeles in 1943 where he continued to work in radio and had over 50 years in broadcasting. Obituaries from September 1989 do not mention his work on the "Town Hall Party" show. His fame stemmed from being the announcer for the "Let's Make a Deal" show that

was hosted by Monte Hall. From 1963 to 1976, Jay Stewart was the show's announcer. He was known for "Jay's Tray" because he carried a covered tray that carried a concealed prize. Sometimes the prize was valuable, sometimes it was not. Monte would haggle with one of the audience members over the value. The audience was known for dressing in costumes and Jay sometimes appeared dressed as a baby when someone picked what was behind the wrong door. His obituaries mentioned his work on "The Joker's Wild," "Sale of the Century," and "Tic Tac Dough"; he also worked on "The Kate Smith Hour," "Carnation Family Party" and "It's Fun To Be Young." When Mike Douglas moved his show from Philadelphia to Los Angeles, Jay became the announcer for his show. He later retired from announcing and became an agent for emcees and announcers, especially for game shows. In 1981, his oldest daughter committed suicide. Her death caused him to take a leave from his work and turn to religion. He appeared on Pat Robertson's show, "700 Club" to profess his faith and did voice over promotions for the CBN cable network. He never overcame his depression and years of chronic back pain. He died of a self-inflicted gunshot at his home at the age of 71, survived by his wife and another daughter.

Town Hall Party
KTTV Promotional Ad
Long Beach Press Telegram
May 5, 1956

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Following are various pictures of the members of Town Hall Party from the Hillbilly-Music.com Collection

Eddie Kirk

Merle Travis and Nudie

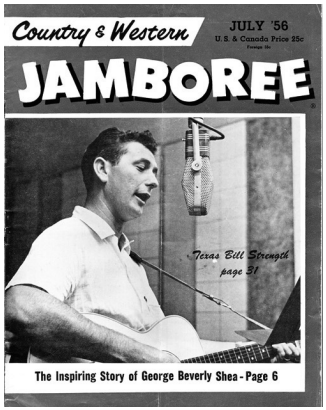
Les “Carrot Top Anderson”

Dick Hamilton with T. Texas Tyler Band

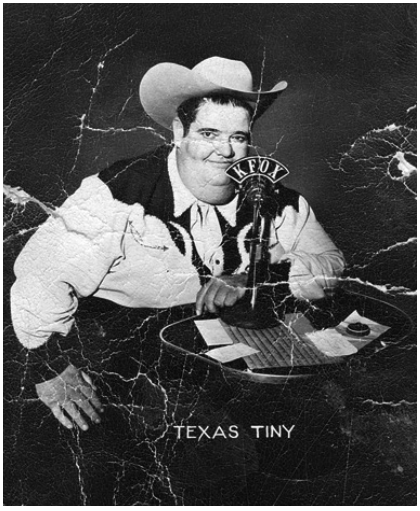
Eddie Cletro, Beryl Harrell (steel), Bert “Formean” Phillips

Eddie Cletro Band at The Palomino

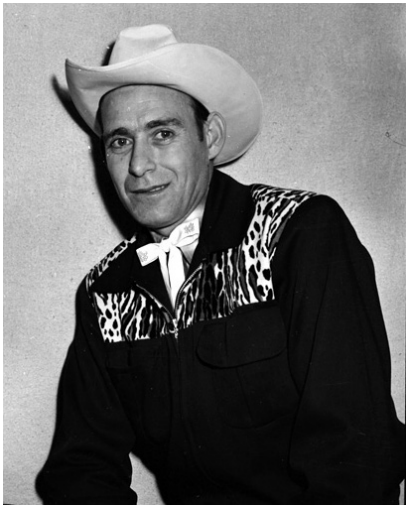
Tex Williams



Texas Bill Strength



Texas Tiny



Jenks (Tex) Carman

Johnny Bond, Fiddlin' Kate, Merle Travis @ THP

Johnny Bond

Freddie Hart

Bill Anderson

Betsy Gay

How Will I Explain About You? Intellectual and Academic Uses of Bluegrass

By Neil V. Rosenberg

As read at The Bluegrass Music Symposium
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky
September 9, 2005

Halfway through the first academic conference devoted to bluegrass music we've heard a diverse group of papers presented both by academic and non-academic researchers. These presentations, together with those we'll be hearing tomorrow, offer a kaleidoscopic vision of bluegrass music. Despite the many differences in subject, perspective, and interpretation, all share an underlying motive: the attempt to better understand and explain this music and its roles in human life. It's with this in mind that I chose the first half of my title, borrowing from a song that Bill Monroe purchased from Knoxville songwriter Arthur Q. Smith and recorded for Columbia in Chicago on the afternoon of September 17, 1946.

Smith's title, for a song about the ending of a love affair, may seem a bit of stretch for a talk about intellectuals and academics. But I think it's appropriate because while the ideals of scholarship expect an objective stance, the realities of scholarly choice are permeated with subjectivity. Over the years many of those who have chosen to study bluegrass have done so because they were at least intrigued by if not in love with this music. Anybody who undertakes to study something so close to himself risks falling out

of love in the process, as the microscope of scholarship reveals the unexpected.

How Will I Explain About You

I faced this dilemma on my own journey into the world of bluegrass scholarship. It began during the 1960s when I served twin apprenticeships as a folklore graduate student at Indiana University in Bloomington and a worker at Bill Monroe's Brown County Jamboree in Bean Blossom. The research strategy that enabled me to bridge the chasm between these two cultural universes, and between the objective and the subjective, was discography.

Based on the form of early sound recordings--discs--the word discography can refer simply to a list of recordings. I call that a reference or citation discography. What I call *research discography* is more than this. Synthesizing from data associated with recordings, I approach discography as a type of archeology. Sound recordings are artifacts laden with cultural meaning. Discographical archeology works well for bluegrass because the music's formative years are documented on recordings like "How Will I Explain About You." This 1946 performance by Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys was published on a 78 in 1947. Columbia never reissued it, although they did release an alternate take in a 1992 CD set. Reissued only once on LP, by County in 1980, it is available now in a Bear Family CD set.

Your handout has the song's text on one side. On the other side is a brief survey of the recording's musical features in a format that I used in classroom teaching. My description utilizes terminology that I've developed as an academic, but it draws as well upon the insider knowledge that I've acquired as a working musician. In putting together this survey, I looked for a musical transcription but didn't find one. Although the song is from the repertoire of the most influential early bluegrass band, it wasn't

prominent in their repertoire and doesn't appear in Monroe's song folios.

This is the only recording of the so-called "original band" issued on 78s that has an obvious mistake--a word clash between Flatt and Monroe in the second line of the first chorus. Monroe did not perform it often, probably because the text, while full of repetition, is unusual in having differing words in each duet chorus. It's a job for a new lead singer to remember. Although written with such subtle twists that reflect the craftsmanship of its author, the song text presents a vision of relationship problems that today's self-help books would frown upon. In essence the narrator--who could be a man or a woman, a nice touch--laments a separation, denies that there are problems in the relationship, and then says, Well if there are problems it's not my fault.

So, how apt a metaphor *is* this song for my talk? To advance the study of bluegrass, we must examine aspects of it that we hadn't noticed or had taken for granted. Smith's song expresses the idea that one member of the couple is struggling to find a way of telling others--"our friends"something he or she doesn't understand or accept in the action of the other member of the couple. Ultimately, the narrator "leav[es] it all up to you." I don't think this final statement offers a good message for bluegrass intellectuals. That brings us to the second half of my title. What do I mean by "intellectual and academic"? An intellectual is concerned with matters involving the intellect, which my dictionary defines as: "the ability to reason or understand or to perceive relationships, differences, etc.; power of thought; mind." The connection between intellectual and academic can be simply that the primary mission of schools is intellect development. I think it has further meaning, though. Individual intellects are nurtured in communication with other intellects. Intellectuals exist in communities. Discourse in intellectual communities is an infinite series of conversations and

debates about facts and ideas, about art and politics. Schools are but training grounds for a lifetime of participation in intellectual communities. In thinking about sharing my thoughts with others as a bluegrass intellectual, I've concluded that the scholar's responsibility is to act as intermediary: I must find a way to explain about *you* to those who are not so close, not so knowing.

We *do* need to explain, and we need too to be able to face the problems and issues. This is particularly true when we're shaping our message for those who are not in love with bluegrass, be they students or just people curious about the music. When names for musical genres grow familiar in everyday language, they become stereotyped. Like celebrities--well known for being well known--they can evoke scorn or indifference as well as love or appreciation. As bluegrass's business leaders have worked for greater visibility and economic success, the stereotypes associated with it have persisted. In order to describe this music accurately, these must be confronted, not denied.

Why Will I Explain About You?

Coming to terms with stereotype is one reason for studying bluegrass, but there are other answers to the question "Why study bluegrass music?" This is a popular music with ties to other contemporary popular musics and folk traditions. Its roots lie in earlier American and, ultimately, European and African musics. Tracing its history, dissecting and analyzing its structures, and comprehending its social relations can provide useful comparative data about music in human society. This musical form has a particularly well-documented history: sixty years of recordings, and forty years of fan literature. It's not a fad, though it has experienced fads. It has also experienced regionalization, gentrification, appropriation, revival, and other social processes that, when examined carefully, have much to tell us. It has spread

around the world from the American southeast so that today it can be heard from Japan to the Czech Republic and many other places as well. It can be a useful facet of post-secondary teaching curriculums that include popular and folk culture.

The inclusion of popular and folk culture in the curriculums of colleges and universities is a comparatively recent phenomenon that is not without controversy. Universities have been part of western culture since the late Middle Ages. For most of their history they have been devoted to educating the young elites in our societies about high culture. In early universities all instruction and scholarship was in Latin, the language of the church. The term "vernacular," based on the Latin word for home-born slaves, was first used to describe the native languages of the common people. Eventually its meaning broadened to describe local popular and folk culture. It is generally associated with the masses, not the elite. Why, then, should vernacular culture be studied in the university? In the 19th century scholars developed rationales for studying folk culture, and in the mid-20th century similar rationales for the study of popular culture were developed. Indeed, the boundaries between folk and popular culture are murky. But the very fact that such rationales were needed reminds us that the academy is an elite institution, and that the study and teaching of vernacular culture in it is viewed by some as an act of cultural subversion.

In the academic workplace, the disciplines in the arts and humanities--literature, language, history, philosophy, music, art, geography, and so on--hold a special position. They educate students about human civilization and cultural heritage. They are entrenched in post-secondary curriculums because professional educators believe that, taken as a whole, these disciplines help us learn how and why we think and behave as we do. Sometimes this belief includes an assumption equating the "best" of our cultural past with our elite culture, but that's debatable.

A few years ago, critic and intellectual historian Jacques Barzun wrote in *Harper's* about "The Tenth Muse," the muse of popular culture. Of course we all know from our schooling in Greek mythology that there are nine muses, goddess daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne [knee-MAWS-in-ee] who preside over song, poetry, the arts and sciences. In his essay Barzun addressed the question of "whether popular culture is the contradiction of high culture or its foundation" as well as related questions of populism and elitism in the arts. In doing so he pondered the fragmentation of today's popular culture and the remoteness of the scholarship on it "from the reality on the street." I was particularly struck by what he said about "the popular" in American music:

It includes cowboy and country, rock and rap, and other offshoots of early-twentieth-century ragtime and jazz. These have subdivided endlessly, each with a special name, fine-drawn characteristics, and clannish devotees.

Like many scholars, Barzun places African-American musics at the center of modern American popular music. This perspective is echoed in Robert Cantwell's emphasis on the importance of blackface minstrelsy in the history of bluegrass. Cantwell's suggestions have been interestingly developed by Allen Farmelo in an article entitled "Another History of Bluegrass: The Segregation of Popular Music in the United States, 1820-1900."

But Barzun could have cast his net even more widely, for in recent decades, the concept of "world music" has opened a Pandora's box of named popular musics from all over that, like bluegrass, are impure mixtures of local vernacular and non-local commercial streams. Each of these named musics has (in addition to clannish devotees) cultural dimensions as well as business strategies; and each is constantly overrunning its own definitional boundaries as it strives in the marketplace. To study popular music today is to examine the places when the art world and the

entertainment business intersect. And it is also to study politics, for all social reportage (or ethnographic research, if you like) has political dimensions.

Who Will Explain About You?

People who teach about popular music to the predominately youthful students in universities and colleges are the ones who decide about curriculum content--what gets taught. These teachers themselves are a diverse group in terms of academic discipline, nationality and politics. In their work they must deal with a broad spectrum of cultures, politics and history. It's a challenge for them to find readings and recordings that will engage their students. Usually they choose a mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar seen through old and new theoretical lenses. Potentially, bluegrass is a good fit for use in such courses. At this level the question becomes "*Who* Will Explain About You?" In which of "the academic tribes" can bluegrass be studied? One such tribe or discipline in which it has been fitted is Folklore.

Indeed, Folklore was the first discipline to include bluegrass in its canon of subjects. The politics of this inclusion were not simple. In his best-selling 1944 anthology, *The Treasury of American Folklore*, Benjamin A. Botkin, then director of the Library of Congress's Archive of American Folk Song, followed the lead of Alan Lomax in distinguishing between "good hillbilly music" and "bad hillbilly music" to justify including a Carter Family piece in his section on folksong. He opened the door for serious scholars like D.K. Wilgus and Archie Green in the 1950s and 60s.

During those years Richard M. Dorson became the self-appointed champion of academic folklore studies. Botkin was his *bete noir*. Today Botkin, who died in 1975, is considered "The Father of Public Folklore." Dorson, however, saw his popularizing

work in books like the *Treasury* as antithetical to the cause of academic folklore. In 1950 Dorson, striving to open doors in the elite world of American academic life, coined the term "fakelore" to describe the work of Botkin and others like him who mostly worked outside of the academy.

Mayne Smith and I knew nothing of this in the early 1960s when our interest in folksong drew us to the Indiana University Folklore Institute as graduate students. Dorson was the Institute's director and our supervisor. He associated all hillbilly music with Botkin's popularization and did not support research on bluegrass. Consequently our decisions to address bluegrass as an academic research topic were not easy. In 1965 Mayne published the first paper on bluegrass in the *Journal of American Folklore*. In 1967 when I told Dorson about *my* forthcoming article in the same journal he told me he was glad I was being published there but disappointed that my article was on bluegrass. Nevertheless these papers paved the way for writing about this music in folklore studies as well as in other disciplines.

For example, George Carney, who retired a few years ago from Oklahoma State University, began a distinguished career as a cultural geographer with his 1974 article "Bluegrass Grows All Around: The Spatial Dimensions of a Country Music Style" in the *Journal of Geography*. His work in mapping the spread of bluegrass was followed by students who built on his models of research to study other forms of music. Studies like this work in two ways: they help cultural geographers understand the topics in which their discipline is interested, and they also provide bluegrass intellectuals with valuable research data--part of the ongoing project of "explaining about you."

The "who" that have studied bluegrass in academia include other disciplines but only a few studies have confronted the stereotypes associated with bluegrass. One example is sociologist

Stephen Sweet's 1996 article "Bluegrass Music and Its Misguided Representation of Appalachia," published in the journal *Popular Music and Society*. In his analysis of the music and lyrics of the bluegrass classics most frequently included on CD anthologies, Sweet argues that:

While music can have a liberatory function . . . bluegrass music instead may impede social progress in Appalachia for two reasons. First, for the society inside of Appalachia, bluegrass music does not provide a potent contribution to rituals aimed at producing collective resistance to exploitation. It largely ignores economic exploitation, and when it does address social problems it most often directs response toward politically safe horizons. Second, bluegrass music hinders social change emanating from outside of Appalachia because it presents misguided descriptions of the mountain country as a generally happy place, inhabited by some culturally backward people. In both cases bluegrass contributes to the status quo, thereby leaving oppressive social relations intact.[37]

While I see some problems in Sweet's study, it's a welcome addition to the literature because it calls attention to issues that heretofore have not been addressed in this way. It's important too, because it relates to concerns of the discipline of sociology, which has utilized various statistical and sampling techniques to address issues of social action. Popular music studies, which I mentioned earlier, are multi-disciplinary, but sociologists predominate in the field. Sweet's concern with political agendas--issues of exploitation and social change to remedy them--is typical of much of the work in this interdisciplinary field.

Similar issues are approached from a different perspective in the work of Jeannie B. Thomas and Doug Enders, who published their article "Bluegrass and 'White Trash': A Case Study Concerning the Name 'Folklore' and Class Bias" in the

Journal of Folklore Research in 2000. They address an ongoing issue in folklore studies--whether or not the name of the discipline impedes its acceptance in the academic world. This debate carries on the concerns that motivated Dorson to coin "fakelore." Their case study involves Enders' experience as a member of a bluegrass band, part of:

> . . . a real community of "bluegrassers" [that was] not so rosy and idyllic as he had imagined. He found himself dressed in the ill-fitting, complete-with-string-tie suit of a dead former band member. He was working for a had-more-savvy-than-talent philandering bandleader . . . a Jay Gatsby in cowboy boots . . . . [His] life with the bluegrassers included routine doses of kindness, sexism, cornbread, racism, community, duplicity, genuine friendship, and bluegrass music of all levels. [28]

They conclude that the bandleader's career demonstrates both resistance and capitulation to "the dominant economic and social order," and discuss at length the complex forces that shape it.

Just this part of the study is useful because it details realities rarely encountered in the literature about bluegrass. But the authors go on to connect their study to concerns about the implications of folklore's "history of studying marginalized people and art" [39]– the vernacular, in a word.

Where Will I Explain About You?

Studies like this make us realize that we must not ask only How, Why, and Who but also *Where*. Many important facts and insights about bluegrass music can be found in bluegrass magazines and on liner notes. But most often, hard questions about the social issues surrounding this music have been debated in the academy and the classroom, where traditions of rigorous discussion are entrenched.

However, as Enders and Thomas point out, the academy doesn't necessarily consider the art we study and the issues surrounding it to be significant or relevant. And even if there is a growing appreciation of the need for the academy to address the issues raised by non-elite arts, another problem lies in the limited and fragmented readership of academic journals.

Around the same time I started writing for folklorists about bluegrass, I also began writing articles in *Bluegrass Unlimited*. Connections from this and from folklore circles soon led me into writing liner notes. At first I didn't think much about why I was doing this: it was just part of my ongoing participation in the social and cultural worlds of bluegrass and folklore in the zeitgeist of the late sixties and early seventies. Its relation to my academic work was this: I was beginning to look at the bluegrass world in terms of the academic questions that engaged me, and as my twin apprenticeship continued I was reshaping my academic perspectives on the basis of my experiences as a musician.

An epiphany came in the late 1970s when Ken Irwin of Rounder Records told me that one of their reissues I'd edited had sold over 20,000 copies. Not only was that a good figure for bluegrass albums then, it was at least 20 times larger than the circulation of the biggest academic journals I was publishing in. I realized that a lot more people were reading my writing in this field than in my academic discipline.

I began to give more serious thought, then, to what I was doing as a writer outside the academy. I think my experience of growing up in a non-academic household that valued intellectual issues was useful. When the *New Yorker* arrived, us kids weren't allowed to read it until my old man had folded the top corner of the cover. John Duffey once told me that Pop Stoneman's way of getting his kids to become musicians was to lay an instrument on the bed and tell them not to touch it. I was like some kids I've met in the world

of bluegrass whose parents were musicians; they didn't know how to play yet, but they knew what it was supposed to sound like. As a teen I read H.L. Mencken and Edmund Wilson--they were just interesting books on the shelf at home--and developed an interest in popular science writing. I didn't know how to write like that, but I knew what such writing could be like.

As my writing about bluegrass for publications outside the academy continued I tried to think about my readers more carefully. I knew that they were interested in the topic being discussed or they wouldn't bother to begin reading. They didn't want a big dose of theory, they wanted facts. They didn't always need the level of description that I would give to students in the classroom or readers of my academic articles. I worked to develop a style of expository prose that was lucid and thought provoking without seeming didactic and preachy.

Not only was this a practical way of thinking about my readers, it felt right to be sharing the results of my research when they seemed to fit the topic at hand. In that sense my writing was shaped in part by my academic perspective. But it was also shaped by my own personal focus on discography and my experiences as a musician. Writing in a variety of publications for diverse audiences, my goal has been to integrate the academic and non-academic intellectual visions of this music, wherever I publish them.

How, Why, Who, Where

Building on a song title from Bill Monroe's influential mid-1940s repertoire, I've asked a series of questions about the intellectual and academic uses of this music: How, Why, Who, and Where.

We've already seen in this symposium's diverse presentations that "how" we study and think about bluegrass music with all its

realities and issues is a matter of personal choice and direction. I say the more the merrier.

The "why" is what brought us all together here--because those who believe bluegrass is an important cultural force need to study it. Whether or not we like it all or everything it stands for, we must strive to understand it.

Examining the question of "who" shows that the bluegrass intellectual world does not consist solely of academics and that no single academic discipline has a privileged perspective on bluegrass. All important thought on this music comes from people whose curiosity draws them into it. They want to know; they find ways of learning.

Finally, there's the "where." As Tommy Goldsmith's *Bluegrass Reader* has shown, important writing about bluegrass appears in a diversity of sources. Whatever and wherever we write about this music we need address the important issues as we see them. Good research and critical writing about bluegrass music ought to confront the realities and explain them.

Today's bluegrass scholars work in a post-Monroe world. In a few months we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the coming-together of the band whose recording we heard earlier. As time passes it becomes ever more difficult to explain why and how people were captivated by that musical texture, as it also becomes ever more difficult to define bluegrass according to it. The challenge to us is to negotiate the many changes in the music and help our fellow intellectuals understand its marvelous diversity. I see this happening in the presentations and dialogues of this symposium and, knowing that, look forward to tomorrow's sessions.

Douglas B. Green writes: "The outright buying of songs was far more common in the 1940s than it is today; indeed, it was common practice among all country musicians. Surely the most

famous song-seller was Arthur Q. Smith, of Knoxville (unrelated to the two other Arthur Smiths) who sold many a fine song for a pittance, among them two of country music's big hits of the 1940s and early 1950s, 'Wedding Bells' (a hit both for Hank Williams and for Jimmy Wakely and Margaret Whiting) and 'I Overlooked An Orchid,' a hit for Carl Smith. Bill recalls 'I guess I've written 90 or 95 percent of the songs with my name on them, but I bought "How Will I Explain About You" from that boy Arthur Smith up in Knoxville. In the early days I'd buy a song or two.'" Liner notes, County CCS 104, *Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys: The Classic Bluegrass Recordings, Volume 1* (1980).

"Picking Myself Apart: A Hoosier Memoir." *Journal of American Folklore* 108 (1995): 277-86.

A very good discographical resource of this type for bluegrass recordings is Charley Pennell's website: http://www.ibiblio.org/hillwilliam/BGdiscography/index.html

Columbia C2K 52478, *The Essential Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys, 1945-1949* (1992.

County CCS 104, *Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys: The Classic Bluegrass Recordings*, Volume 1, 1980.

BCD 16399 FL *Bill Monroe: Blue Moon of Kentucky 1936-1949* (2002).

In *The Best American Essays 2002*, ed. Stephen Jay Gould (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 1-12. The quotes that follow are from pages 1 and 2 of that version of the essay.

They are Calliope, Clio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polymnia or Polyhymnia, Terpsichore, Thallia, and Urania. Cf. Apollo. [*Webster's New International Dictionary*, Second Edition, p. 1614]

Allen Farmelo, "Another History of Bluegrass: The Segregation of Popular Music in the United States, 1820-1900." *Journal of Popular Music* 25.1-2 (Spring & Summer 2001) [page #s wanted].

Hazard Adams, *The Academic Tribes*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988 (2nd edition).

NY: Crown, 1944, 890.

Mayne Smith, "An Introduction to Bluegrass." *Journal of American Folklore* 78 (1965): 245-56.

"From Sound to Style: The Emergence of Bluegrass." *Journal of American Folklore* 80 (1967): 143-50.

George O. Carney, "Bluegrass Grows All Around: The Spatial Dimensions of a Country Music Style." *Journal of Geography* 73 (1974): 34-55.

20.3 (1996): 37-52.

37.1 (2000): 23-52.

MELODIC STRUCTURE (two 4-phrase strophes)
(verse) A B A C
(chorus) D B A C
3/4 time

HARMONIC STRUCTURE (chords in each phrase)

(verse)		(chorus)
A:I-IV-I	D:	IV-I
B:I-V	B:	I-V
A:I-IV-I	A:	I-IV-I
C:I-V-I	C:	I-V-I

Key of G

TEXT STRUCTURE (Solo verse = v, duet harmony chorus = ch)
v1, ch1; v2, ch2; v3, ch3; ch3

COMPLETE PERFORMANCE STRUCTURE (11 strophes)
f - v1 - ch1 - m - v2 - ch2 - f - v3 - ch3 - m - ch3

INSTRUMENTAL TEXTURES

All instruments stay within the melodic and harmonic structure of the song except to play occasional chromatic notes in phrases at chord changes.

Guitar plays open-string chords and runs. Its rhythmic support of and phrasing interaction with other instruments can be heard during mandolin and fiddle breaks.

Banjo plays eighth notes, with quarter-note runs at ends and beginnings of phrases. It's most audible during the vocals at the end of held-out lyrics.

Bass plays all three beats of each measure throughout; a "walking bass" sound on a waltz-tempo piece.

Mandolin plays backup melody except when Monroe is singing (it's inaudible then); tremolo behind the fiddle breaks; and a combination of tremolo and single-note runs behind the vocals.

Fiddle plays mainly single note obbligato behind vocals. It's inaudible during mandolin breaks.

LYRICAL ANALYSIS

First-person narrative, gender neutral.

Narrator has been abandoned by "my darling," "to travel alone." Lonely and blue, narrator wants to know when friends ask why "you're not around," "how will I explain about you?"

"How will I explain about you?" ends each verse, and opens and closes all three choruses. It's sung 11 times. It is reinforced by the rhyme scheme -- it's the only line that is rhymed, with "blue," "through," and (twice each) "true," and "you." Other repetitions are: "why you're not around" and "pathway(s)."

Narrator protests: has been faithful and true; but is now alone and friends will be disbelieving about their being "through."

Narrator leaves explanation "all up to you." What's unsaid: it's your responsibility; I'm in denial.

"How Will I Explain About You?" Columbia CCO 4614-1, recorded September 17, 1946, 1-3 PM. Bill Monroe, mandolin; Lester Flatt, guitar; Earl Scruggs, banjo; Chubby Wise, fiddle; Howard Watts ("Cedric Rainwater"), bass.

Opening, a "break" (full verse melody) by fiddler Chubby Wise

(verse 1 – vocal solo by Lester Flatt):
You left me, my darling, to travel alone
My heart is so lonely and blue
When friends ask about you -- why you're not around
How will I explain about you?

(chorus 1 – Monroe sings tenor harmony to Flatt)
How will I explain about you?
They [Flatt] I [Monroe] know I've been faithful and true
So when they start asking why you're not around
How will I explain about you?

Mandolin break by Bill Monroe

(verse 2):
They saw us together for such a long time
They knew that I loved you so true
But now that you've gone and I'm left all alone
How will I explain about you?

(chorus 2)
How will I explain about you?
I can't let them know that we're through
They wouldn't believe it could ever be true
How will I explain about you?

Fiddle break, Wise

(verse 3)
If ever you're lonely and wish to return
Remember I'm waiting for you
But if I must travel life's pathway alone
How will I explain about you?

(chorus 3)
How will I explain about you?
I'm leaving it all up to you
And if you insist that our pathways must part
How will I explain about you?

Mandolin break, Monroe

(chorus 3)

The Golden Era of Country Music in Japan

By Kenichi Yamaguchi
Toyota City, Japan

Introduction

It has been 76 years since World War II ended. Country music was brought to Japan essentially by the Occupation Forces. Japanese country musicians were brought up in the music business to entertain GIs first. Influenced by the rockabilly sensation, these artists established the golden era of country music in Japan from the late 1950s through the mid-1960s. Among them, three Japanese musicians who clung to country music throughout their lives have done a great job. And country music in Japan has been passed down from one generation to another. There are not a large number of country music fans in Japan, but the music continues to be faithfully supported by a tightly knit group of enthusiastic country music fans here and there in Japan.

The passage of the history of country music in Japan is presented and three musicians who have contributed a great deal to country music in Japan are featured in this paper.

1. World War II in the Pacific and Post War Japan

1.1 World War II in the Pacific

1) Commencement of World War II in the Pacific

Seventy-five years after "Pearl Harbor," the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, visited Oahu Island of Hawaii on December 26 and 27 in 2016. This was the first time that a Japanese Prime Minister met to remember Pearl Harbor with a U.S. President. He

offered his sincere and everlasting condolences to the souls of those who lost their lives there at Pearl Harbor, and he addressed the power of reconciliation.

It is sad and miserable to remember, but the war commenced on December 7, 1941 with the sudden Japanese attack of 353 Imperial Japanese fighter planes on Pearl Harbor. U.S. battleships, cruisers and destroyers were sunk or damaged, aircrafts were destroyed, and 2,403 Americans were killed.

2) During the War – No American Culture

The war was prolonged futilely, and times were getting harder for Japanese people. Young men and supporters of the family were drafted into the army. Food, resources and consumer goods were gradually becoming scarcer.

The Japanese government restricted the use of American culture. People could not use English words anymore, so entertainers using English names had to change their stage names. For example, "Dick Mine" changed to Koichi Mine, "Miss Columbia" to Misao Matsubara, "Victor Chorus" to Kachidoki, and "Columbia Chorus" to Nicchiku Gassho-dan. People were not able to use coined, borrowed English words like "ski," "skate," "record," "golf," "rugby," and so on.

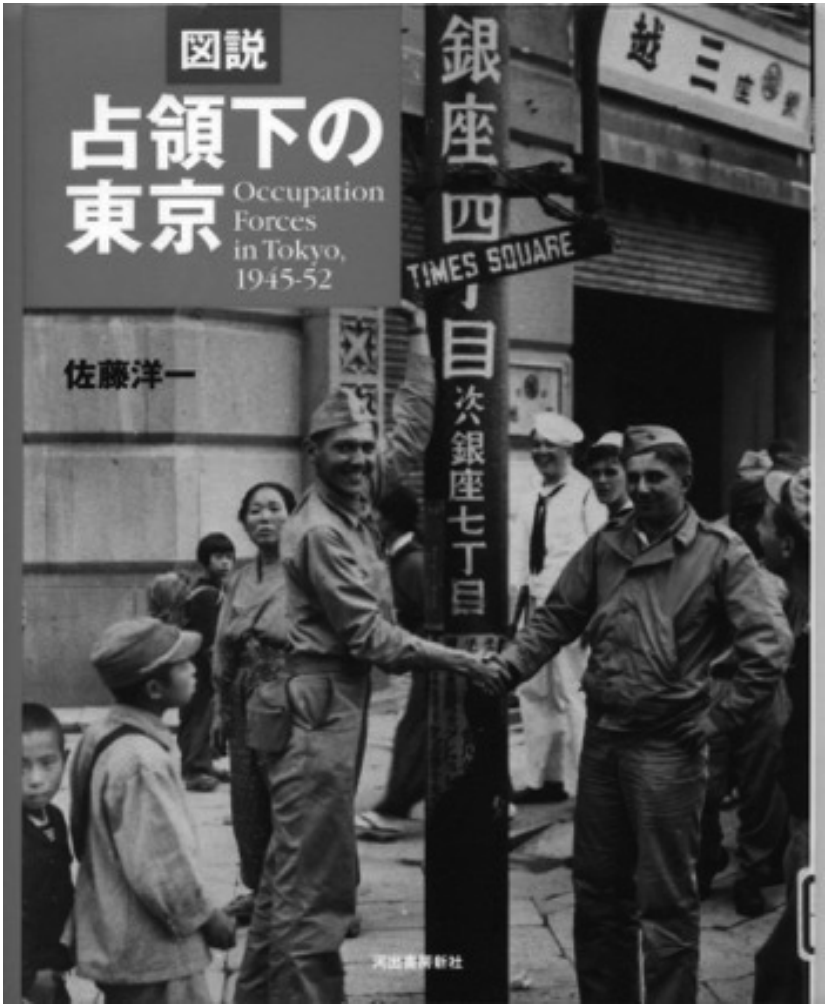
The government also issued the "Official Weekly Gazette No. 328" mandate, which withdrew American and English music records from music stores on Jan. 28, 1943. We could not enjoy the songs as before. Some jazz examples included "Dinah," "My Blue Heaven," and "Alexander's Ragtime Band." We no longer were allowed to listen to American Folk Songs like "Yankee Doodle," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Home on the Range," "Old Black Joe," or "Aloha 'Oe." American popular songs like "St. Louis Blues," "American Patrol Op. 92," and "Get Out and Get under the Moon" were also excluded.

3) End of World War II in the Pacific

Japan's situation in the war gradually worsened. Finally, two atomic bombs and lots of air raids destroyed the land of Japan and millions of people were burned out. These were death blows to Japan, and at last the war ended on August 15, 1945.

Soon Douglas MacArthur arrived, Japan was occupied by the victorious nations, and the military requisitioned buildings, lands and houses for their own use. The Daiichi Life Insurance building was used as the GHQ office. Military bases and camps were scattered throughout the Japanese Islands. Many military officers and officials lived in Japanese residences seized from rich and wealthy people. The Tokyo Takarazuka Theater was changed to the Ernie Pyle Theater as an amusement facility for resident U.S. military soldiers. The Kasumigaseki Country Club switched to the Johnson Air Force Base Golf Club. And one of the busiest streets in Tokyo, Ginza Street, was re-named "Times Square."

Ernie Pyle Theater from Tokyo Takarazuka Theater
Y. Sato : Occupied Tokyo, Kawade Shobo (2006)



Times Square from Ginza Street

1.2 Post War Japan, namely, Occupied Japan

1) Occupied Japan

Lots of U.S. soldiers were stationed in occupied Japan. As their numbers increased, American culture began spreading rapidly throughout Japan. To absorb the culture of victorious nations, English conversation was booming among Japanese people and

English text books were selling well. An English radio program became especially popular, which began with the phrase, "Come, Come Everybody."

2) Spreading of American Culture

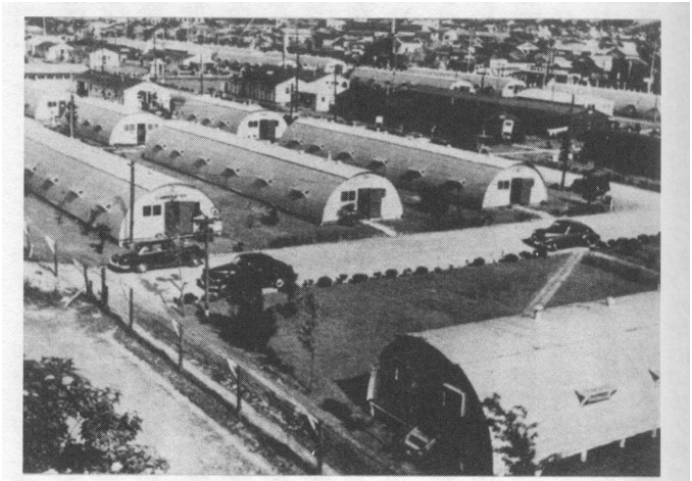
Radio stations of AFRS, the Armed Force Radio Service, also spread American culture to the Japanese. They were networked all over the country. The broadcasts were originally for the US resident soldiers in Japan, but Japanese people were able to listen to them easily.

Each AFRS radio station broadcasted several kinds of music like jazz, popular music, dance music, Latin, French, country & western music and so on. In those days, Japanese people generally called all foreign music "jazz." American culture smoothly filtered into the hearts of the Japanese people. American music heard on the air played an important role in smoothing the differences in racial exchange, overcoming the walls of language and culture.

2. Entertainment Business in Occupation Force Camps

2.1 Entertainments in Clubs of Occupation Force Camps

To kill time for bored military officers and soldiers, a few clubs and amusement facilities were built in the occupation force camps. They were based on classes of rank, such as OC (Officer's Club), NCO (Non Commissioned Club), EM (Enlisted Club) and so on. Various events and programs were held to entertain officers and GI soldiers and their families at each club. For lower classes, their buildings were simple Quonset huts. The huts were also used as bars, clubs and dance halls.



カマボコ兵舎（横浜市内）［写真 2］

(1) Quonset huts

カマボコ兵舎内での演奏風景（1950 年代初頭，横浜市内）［写真 5］

(2) Inside of Quonset huts

Mamoru Touya ; From Occupation Force Clubs to Japanese Pop Songs / Misuzu Shobo(2005)

2.2 Entertainments by Japanese

In these clubs Japanese entertainers often performed. In addition to the presentation of classical and light music, also magic, judo, karate, flower arrangement and tea ceremonies were shown. Gradually the numbers of these performers increased. Thus, military officers and soldiers enjoyed and learned traditional Japanese culture.

2.3 Japanese Musicians and Singers Who Later Became Famous Performed in Occupation Force Clubs

Among these entertainers who worked at military camps and bases, some became big names in their fields later. Some of them are listed below.

Popular Music Singers: Izumi Yukimura, Chiemi Eri, Peggy Hayama, Yoshiko Ishii, Kazuko Matsuo, Frank Nagai
Jazz Players: Yuzuru Sera, Hidehiko Matsumoto, George Kawaguchi, Toshio Oida,
Hidehiko Matsumoto, Shungo Sawada,
Band Leaders: Smiley Ohara, Nobuo Hara,
Music Production Presidents: Nabe-Production (Shin and Misa Watanabe),
Hori-Production (Takeo Hori)

They polished their artistic skills in each field and increased their entertainment techniques through experiences in the camps. Artists like those listed above founded the base of popular entertainment in postwar Japan and played an active and important role for a long time.

2.4 Country Music Entertainments

In the Occupation Forces many soldiers came from the southern part of the U.S., so they asked Japanese musicians and entertainers to play country music. To meet the taste in country

music for GIs, some Hawaiian and jazz bands changed to country music bands. Students also formed country music bands. Following are the bands who often performed and earned money in the camps, and the year they founded their bands.

1947 Wild Geese (Student Band in Kyoto)
1948 Western Ramblers by Hiroshi Toyama
1949 Chuck Wagon Boys by B. Kuroda, T. Ihara, H. Sogabe et al.
1951 Wagon Masters by M. Harada, T. Hori, K. Kosaka, K. Teramoto et al.
1955 Tomi Fujiyama
1957 Takeo Hori, Keiichi Teramoto & Swing West
1957 Jimmie Tokita & Mountain Playboys
1960 Yoshio Ohno & Country Mates

Among those who sang in US Army camps, Kazuya Kosaka, Jimmie Tokita, Yoshio Ohno, Keiichi Teramoto and others later became famous country musicians in Japan.

3. Spreading of Country Music in Japan

Country music played by Japanese musicians was performed for the occupied forces first, but soon it began to be played for Japanese people, too. Some elements, as movies, radio programs, music societies and so on, had a positive effect on the spread of country music in Japan.

1) Western Movies and Country Music

First came Western movies, that is to say cowboy movies. It was “the golden era of Western movies” around the early 1950s.

<Year> <Movie> <Theme song>
1940 Stage Coach / “Bury Me Not on Lone Prairie”
1947 My Darling Clementine / “My Darling Clementine”

1949 The Paleface / “Buttons & Bows”
1951 She Wore a Yellow Ribbon / “She Wore a Yellow…”
1952 High Noon / “High Noon”
1953 Shane / “The Call of the Far-away Hills”
1957 Gun Fight at the OK Corral / “OK Corral”
1958 The Big Country / “The Big Country”

These movies were big hits, one after the other, and their theme songs also became very popular. Especially “Bury Me Not on Lone Prairie” and “Buttons and Bows” were both huge hits. At that time, country music was called “western music” or “western songs” in Japan.

2) Country Music Radio Programs

The second influence was radio broadcasting. WVTR, AFRS in the Tokyo district, and later FEN, broadcast a country music program called “Honshu Hayride,” which aired every day at 11:30 am and 4:00 pm. Japanese country musicians eagerly listened to this program to widen their repertoires. Then the enthusiastic general public—although not so many---did too. Thus, the number of country music lovers increased little by little.

Five years later one of the domestic radio stations started broadcasting a weekly country music program, “Sunday Western,” on Bunka Broadcast in Feb. 1957. The theme song was “Movin’ On” by Hank Snow, and Tetsyua Shimamura and Mariko Tanaka commented on “western music” easily and knowledgeably. In 1958 Radio Kanto aired “Western Jamboree.” The theme song was “Carolina Breakdown” by Don Gibson, and Fumio Suzuki hosted the program. The “Western Jamboree” program was followed by “Western Holiday” at Radio Kanto in 1961.

3) Country Music Societies and Record Concerts

With the spread of western movies and radio programs, there were some country music lovers especially in the big cities of Japan. Most of them were highly educated. Because the lyrics of country music songs are in English, these western music buffs gathered and established private country music societies in Tokyo and in Osaka as follows.

1952 “Music Life” Club
1955 Country & Western Music Society (Tokyo)
1954 American Folk Music Society (Osaka)

They held record concerts regularly. They spent their time enjoying and sharing country music, since records were precious and rare at that time. In Tokyo, H. Fujii, T. Ihara and K. Yui explained these records at the “Music Life Friend Club” concert in 1952. The Country & Western Music Society had hosted the “Western Music Fun Club Concert” at Tokyo since 1955, and the American Folk Music Society began their “Vertical Cabinet” at Osaka in 1955.

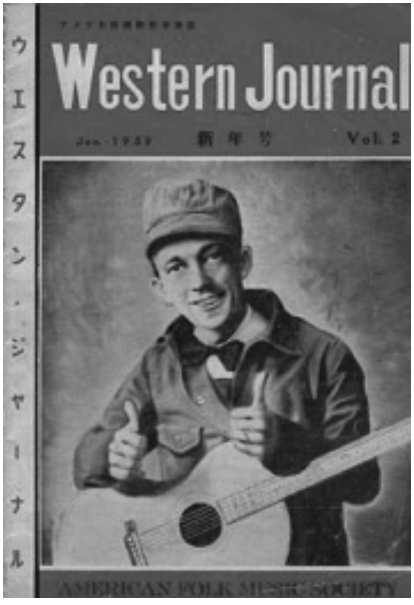
4) Country Music Magazines

After the war, Japanese people gradually began to be interested in foreign music because the occupation forces came and AFRS aired several new kinds of music. According to the current of the time, the “Music Life” company published a magazine focused on music styles like country, Hawaiian, tango and so on, in 1951.

Private music societies also handed out pamphlets to explain the music easily at record concerts. Then the American Folk Music Society in Osaka published the “Western Journal” in 1958. This was the first serial country music magazine in Japan.

It consisted of 30 pages, introducing country music easily. Unfortunately they had to cease publication after only three issues, even though they collected music information that was very difficult to obtain under severe conditions.

For a while, there was a time of no magazines for country music, but in 1963 the long-lived magazine of country music in Japan named “Country and Western” published their first issue as a quarterly magazine. A western music buff named Takashi Shimbo and his friends published it themselves. Over 80 issues were published through the late ’70s. This magazine brought up many country music lovers and gave them a lot of information about the music.



Western Journal

"Country and Western" Magazine, No. 1

5) Importing Country Records and Selling Musical Instruments

Some of the people who were crazy about country music wanted to buy records and musical instruments. Gradually such kinds of business paid off. Many of them were located in a student town, Kanda, in Tokyo. Some of the important record shops include Muse-sha, Harmony and Disc Union. The important musical instrument shops are Kawase and Yamano.

6) Release of Country Records

Japanese record companies began to release country music records extensively in the late 1950s. Lots of records from RCA Victor, Columbia, Decca, Dot, United Artists, Capitol, MGM, Kapp, Epic, Vanguard and others were released, one after another.

The factors mentioned above affected and increased the popularity of country music. So country music, called "western music" in Japan, gradually became better known, and Japanese country musicians enjoyed their popularity, too.

4. Golden Era of Country Music

For five years after the war ended, occupation forces were stationed in Japan. The chaotic period of time for post-war Japan gradually settled down, and the economy was prospering slowly. In 1950 the Korean War broke out. The US Army asked Japan to supply war materials and foods, so businesses increased in order to meet these demands. This raised the standard of living of Japanese people little by little, and the people could afford to enjoy a few popular amusements.

A small minority of these people turned their faces toward country music. Thus the period from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s became the golden era of "western" music.

4.1 Live Western Music for Japanese

1) "Jazz Kissa" - Live at Music Café-

After the Korean War broke out in 1950, live performances in the camps were decreasing little by little. But on the other hand, the Japanese economic situation was getting better day by day.

Music cafés called "jazz kissa" appeared in big cities, and their numbers were increasing. Music like jazz, Hawaiian, chanson (French), "western" (country), Latin and other styles were played at the jazz kissa cafés. Music like this was played at the cafés and entertained the Japanese. Each area like Ginza, Ikebukuro and Shinjuku had jazz kissas as follows.

Ginza: Tennessee, ACB, New Mimatsu, Tact
Ikebukuro: Drum, Swan
Shinjuku: ACB, La Seine, Opera House Shibuya, Theatre, Prince

Western music was played at Tennessee, ACB, New Mimatsu and Tact, among other clubs, and gradually became more and more popular.

2) "Western Carnival" - Live Country Music Concert

Some western music players who sang at jazz kissas gathered and started a live country music concert called "Western Carnival" in 1953, which was held twice a year at the Tokyo Video Hall. The Western Carnival was a good opportunity for these musicians to play in front of large audiences. Western music continued to grow in popularity. As the number of audience members increased and the popularity of western music grew, the hall became too small.

So the site was moved to a larger hall, the Nichi-Geki Theater. Thus, the name changed from "Western Carnival" to "Nichi-Geki Western Carnival." It ended with the eighth concert in the autumn of 1957.

Some of the singers in bands who played onstage frequently at the Western Carnival later became very famous in other musical fields.

4.2 The "Rockabilly" Sensation and Authentic Country Music

1) "Nichi-Geki Western Carnival"

Some of the western bands who played at the Western Carnival also entertained onstage at the Nichi-Geki Western Carnival. Then at that moment in musical history Elvis Presley had a big hit with his song, "Heartbreak Hotel" in the US. This style of music came to Japan a little later as the "Rockabilly" sensation. So a few western singers in Japan sang rockabilly songs and played the electric guitar, shaking their bodies onstage like Elvis. They excited many teenaged girls and made them crazy, for a couple of years. The three greatest rockabilly stars were Keijiro Yamashita, Masaaki Hirao and Mickey Curtiss in Japan.

The Carnival continued till the middle of 1960s, following the fashion of the music. Specifically, the Carnival established various Japanese music cultures like the "Electric Guitar Sound"

sensation and the "Group Sound." From this stage many famous entertainers in various fields got their start. They are as follows: Hisahiko Iida, Kazuya Kosaka, Hiroshi Mizuhara, Kyu Sakamoto, Takuya Joe, Hiroshi Inoue, Mitsuo Sagawa, Takeshi Teramoto, Chosuke Ikariya and others.

2) Authentic Country Music Concert ----"Tokyo Grand Ole Opry"

During the rockabilly sensation, Bunka Broadcast had been airing "Sunday Western" to enlighten authentic country music fans since 1957. Some of the members of the Sunday Western Fun Club gave a country music concert as the "Tokyo Grand Ole Opry" in 1960.

The Opry was held monthly and lasted through the mid-1960s. These were the regular performers: M. Harada & Wagon Aces, K. Teramoto & Country Gentlemen, J. Tokita & Mountain Playboys, Robert Tainaka & Smoky Rangers, Biji Kuroda, Yoshio Ohno, USA Air Force Bands, etc. These artists were responsible for spreading the popularity of authentic country music to a highly educated audience.

In the 1960s, many country music stars from the USA visited Japan, and some of them performed on the stage of Tokyo Grand Ole Opry. These live concerts were definite evidence of the golden era of country music in Japan.

November, 1962: Johnny Cash with June Carter
April, 1963: Ferlin Huskey
February, 1964: Hank Snow
May, 1964: Little Jimmie Dickens
May, 1964: Roy Acuff
November, 1964: Marty Robbins
October, 1965: Pop & Country (Nashville Sound); Chet Atkins, Hank Locklin,

The Browns, Skeeter Davis, et al
December, 1966: Sons of the Pioneers
February, 1967: Buck Owens & Buckaroos
March, 1967: Hank Thompson

Founders of Tokyo Grand Ole Opry

Stage of Tokyo Grand Ole Opry

4.3 Three Japanese "Western" Musicians Clung to Country Music

Among the performers of Tokyo Grand Ole Opry, there were three Japanese western musicians who clung to country music throughout their lives who should be mentioned. They all were university graduates, although they spent some tough days just after the war. Lots of band mates who played with them during the golden era of western music switched jobs. However, these three men have loved country music for their entire lifetimes.

1) Jimmie Tokita

The first of the three is Jimmie Tokita, born in Tokyo in 1936. At 15 years old he joined Hiroshi Toyama's Western Ramblers, one of the earliest and the most popular bands at that time, and then he organized a student country music band called the "Western Jolly Boys" with Yoshio Ohno in 1952. Later he founded his own band, the "Mountain Playboys" in 1957, while he was still a student of Aoyama University. He went to the USA from 1967-1969 by himself.

Jimmie released over 10 LP albums of country music. His first one, *Western Holiday*, was released in 1962. He was the Japanese country singer who released the most records. Sadly, he passed away in 2000.

Chosuke Ikariya, Kiyohiko Ozaki, Takeshi Terauchi and others came from his band, and they later became very popular in the fields of music and comedy in Japan.

Jimmie Tokita & Mountain Playboys

2) Keiichi Teramoto

The 2nd is Keiichi Teramoto, born in Tokyo in 1933. During his college days at Aoyama University for eight years, he played in the Chuck Wagon Boys and Wagon Masters. He also formed "Swing West" with Takeo Hori, who later became a founder of the famous entertainment production "Hori-Pro" in 1957, later performing onstage at the "Western Carnival" and "Tokyo Grand Ole Opry. Then he formed his own bands, "Keiichi Teramoto and Country Gentlemen" and "Kelly's Men."

He was awarded the "Distinguished Lifetime Achievement" award from the Country Music Association (CMA) in 1991. He reunited his band, the Country Gentlemen in 1993 and published a biographical book, "Straight Line to Country Music" in 2000. The 50th anniversary concert for his country music career was held in 2000. He is still playing and performing sometime as a country music singer.

「寺本圭一初リサイタル」のパンフレットに紹介されたスイング・ウエスト

カール・スミスのギターをコピーして作らせ、愛用していた

Days in the Band “Swing West” around in 1957

3) Yoshio Ohno

The last is Yoshio Ohno, born in Tokyo in 1931. He formed the “Western Jolly Boys” with Jimmie Tokita as a college freshman at Hosei University in 1952. Then he joined and played the banjo in several western music bands: the Country Rangers (1954), the Mountain Boys (1952-55), Sons of Drifters (1957) and Swing West (1957). In 1960 he went to Nashville, Tennessee, and performed on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry on May 7, as the first Oriental artists to appear on that legendary stage. Returning to Japan, he soon formed his own band, the “Country Mates” in 1960.

He celebrated his 85th birthday at a concert with the Country Mates in 2016, and he is still playing regularly.

Yoshio Ohno at Grand Ole Opry on May 26, 1960

5. Current State of Country Music in Japan and Conclusion

5.1 Current State of Country Music in Japan

Lots of the US soldiers transferred into occupied Japan and were stationed there after World War II. By entertaining the soldiers, Japanese country musicians polished their skills and grew. Despite the unprecedented boom of rockabilly which swept through Japan, some enthusiastic country musicians defended authentic country music.

Following the three artists described in the previous chapter, Charlie Nagatani and Kenji Nagatomi carried on the traditions of country music in Japan. They each have their own live music clubs at Kumamoto and Kyoto and perform there regularly. They both have been involved with a big annual country music festival in Japan for over 30 years, which keeps attracting more country music fans in Japan.

There are about 20 bluegrass festivals a year in Japan now. Among them, over 100 bands have played on the stage at the biggest festival, "Takarazuka" for over 40 years. Recently, young student bands, especially from celebrated and excellent universities, are increasing at an incredible rate. These young men who have loved bluegrass music were mentored by Toshio Watanabe and "Sab Watanabe" Inoue. Toshio founded BOM Service, which has been doing mail-order sales of bluegrass and country music (mainly bluegrass) since 1971. He has organized the Takarazuka Bluegrass Festival for more than 40 years. Sab has also published "MoonShiner," the Japanese journal of bluegrass music, since 1984. Offering lots of information with abundant data, know-how, and information for collectors, they continue to support the base of bluegrass music in Japan. Sab and Toshio Watanabe were awarded the Distinguished Achievement Award by the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) in 1995, and Sab received the IBMA Print Personality of the Year award in 1998.

5.2 Conclusion

It has been 76 years since World War II ended. Country music was brought to Japan essentially by the Occupation Forces and AFRS. Japanese country musicians were brought up in the music business to entertain GIs first. Influenced by the rockabilly sensation, these artists established the golden era of country music in Japan from the late 1950s through the mid-1960s. From the western music stages during this era, "the electric guitar sound" and "the group sound" sensations originated.

Thus, authentic western singers founded the basis of popular music today in Japan, and country music in Japan has been passed down from one generation to another. There are not a large number of country music fans in Japan, but the music continues to be faithfully supported by a tightly knit group of enthusiastic country music fans here and there in Japan.

Acknowledgments

I dedicate this paper to the late Mr. Sadahiro Mabuchi and the late Mr. Toshiyuki Tsuda, who died in November, 2016 and in February, 2017. Both of my friends furnished important information to me.

I also offer special thanks to Yoshio Ohno and J. T. Kanehira, who permitted me to use their precious photographs. And I very specially thank my wife Junko Yamaguchi, who has been allowing my selfishness for more than 40 years.

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Where Is Ford Rush?

By Barbara J. Rose

Manson Ford Rush was born in Marion County, Columbia, Mississippi on April 7, 1890. His 1942 delayed birth certificate states this information as accurate. There was no requirement of birth certificates, in the state of Mississippi, at the time Ford was born. His delayed certificate profile was certified dependent upon the written affidavit of a family member or close friend. The birth certificate lists Ford's full address as WSM, Nashville, Tennessee. The witness affidavit to his birth states *"I have known him since April of 1924."* George Hay, 3302 Orleans Drive, Nashville Tennessee

Ford had been a household name several times prior to 1942. From 1910 to 1917 he worked in a variety of jobs: carpet salesman, Inspector, Floorwalker, and National Insurance Agent, all the while moonlighting as a singer with "Four Singing Sailors". The "Four Singing Sailors" entertained at various locations in St. Louis.

During 1912 Ford married Louise Eva Bostelman and they remained married for 54 years. The year 1918 began with the couple residing in St Louis. In May of the same year *Variety Magazine* reported that Ford had moved to San Francisco to work as the manager of Jerome Remick Publishing House, a music publishing firm located at 608 Market Street.

Amid the entertainment environment of 1918, Ford Sr.'s fame began to blossom. *Variety Magazine* continued to write about him as "*an added attraction to the Tivoli Theater.*" Ford sings from the audience of 1,500 people, performing with Al Jolson, who is on stage. During that time-period Ford formed "The Remick

Singers.". They performed at numerous fund raisers, and carried out "song plugging" for other performers. Ford performed at the T and D Theater and quickly becomes known for singing the song "Smiles" as reported by the *Oakland Tribune* on July 29, 1918. Ford's popularity as an entertainer grew as 1919 progressed and . Ford and Louise welcomed the birth of Ford Edward Rush Jr. on August 16, 1919.

In 1920, Ford Rush became known for his handsome looks. His picture was used in a serial soap opera *"Ann and Phil,"* which was published in the weekly *San Francisco Call and Post*.

During 1920, Ford performed at The Casino, The Lyric Theater, The Tavoli, Pantages and The Coliseum Theater. He plugged songs—taking them to singers to entice them to perform them live--individually and with "The Remick Singers".

In November of 1920 he was broadcasting as a "tenor" over radio 6XC. This DeForrest Radiophone station was operated at the California Theater, San Francisco. According to *Radio News*, "By placing singers and their backs to the piano…enough sound intensity from the piano is obtained thru the singers microfones so as to obtain a proper blending of the voices and piano, Mr. Ford Rush of California Theater, Madam Frieda Hempel and Forest Lamont, stars of the Chicago Grand Opera Company, have been the features of the special concert. Shows are sent out at 7:15 pm and 9:00 pm weekdays, lasting at least one half hour."

Ford Rush, Mort Harris and Patrick La Bruin of the California Theater put together a cast of 15 people to perform individually and as a group at the "Melody Shop," a musical theater of sorts that is located within the California Theater building itself. The group, along with Ben Black, sets up the stage with musical instruments. Singers are located where it is as acoustically beneficial as possible. Performers plug the new hot songs of the day. It was labeled a "huge success."

The first million dollar movie made in the USA, *Foolish Wives*, opened at the Strand Theater in San Francisco in 1922. Ford, as the opening act, sang "Yoo Hoo" and "When Shall We Meet Again" for the movie that was quite "*risqué*" with a "*salacious*" story line.

On December 22, 1922 Ford Rush and his family had moved to Chicago. *Variety Magazine* carried an advertisement that stated Ford was the manager of Sherman and Clay Publishing, Chicago office.

In 1923 Ford was broadcasting at Station WCK in Chicago. A newspaper advertisement described him performing as a "tenor soloist." On May 12 the St. Louis *Dispatch* radio schedules listed "Frank Magine (composer) presenting his own songs. Assisted by Ford Rush, tenor. Stuart Barrie is at the organ."

The performance was repeated during the week at 8 p.m. from the Missouri Theater.

In 1924, Ford became a household name on radio station WLS in Chicago after he formed a partnership with Glenn Rowell. They become known by several names: "Big Ford and Little Glen," "Ford and Glenn," the "How do you do Boys?" and "The Lullaby Boys." The two entertainers wrote many songs together and recorded with Columbia Records. George D. Hay, an announcer at WLS, introduced the pair on a recording of "Lullaby Time." In 1925, George D. Hay moved to Nashville to join radio station WSM. George D. Hay was known as "The Solemn Ole Judge" and he, Ford Rush and Glenn Rowell formed a friendship that lasted many years.

"Ford and Glenn" were joined by Gene Carroll in 1929; they formed a trio that performed skits, songs and programs; some of their material leaned towards the "risqué." The three disbanded as performers on September 17, 1929 after Ford requested being released from their contract with Forster Music. However, Ford

and Glenn remained friends throughout their lives and performed together again in later years.

In 1930 loyal fans were asking "*Where is Ford Rush?*" The parting of the ways of Ford and Glenn was a sad note for those loyal fans. Newspaper stories were published during 1930 that mentioned Ford Rush. In March, a newspaper stated that Ford was the "feature performer on an elaborate frolic given by WSM–The National Life and Accident Insurance Co at 11:30 on Thursday night." The article also stated that Rush "is visiting his friend the 'Solemn Old Judge' of the Grand Ole' Opry."

According to the 1930 United States census, the Rush family was living in Ward 22, St Louis, MO. The rent was $67.50 per month and Ford owned a radio set. In August, 1930, a *Chicago Herold* reporter wrote "I heard Ford was tenoring at KMOX." Family files reveal musical and personal relationships during the year of 1930, as well as in future years, with George Brown, Willie Raskins, Billy Hill, George Hay, Smokey Duvall, Wallace Fowler, Graydon Hall, Hoagy Carmichael, and Glenn Rowell.

Over the years when I sifted through the contents of my grandfather's treasures, I would find letters and telegrams from Billy Hill. Prior to Internet availability I did not know who Billy Hill was. I wondered "Why did this gentleman keep requesting finances? Why did he write about songs he had found?" Wikipedia was helpful in figuring out Billy Hill, as was the music in grandfather's collection.

In October, 1931, Ford Rush became known on radio WLW in Cincinnati as "Old Man Sunshine." During 1931 he played a Martin tenor guitar and was nominated for the award "Best Radio Singer." Over the next several years Ford received other accolades; for example, a "WLW poll of listeners" sent 20,000 fan- letters in one day to WLW, naming Ford as "Favorite Radio Performer." During 1932, Ford's radio program was rated "Best Children's

Program" by *Radio Digest*. In March, 1932, Ford signed a one year, $40,000 exclusive contract with Crosley Radio. The shows were broadcast over shortwave WSXAL and WLW. Ford's mailbag included letters from New Zealand, Hawaii, Australia, and South Africa. *In April, 1932, Sidney Teneyck of Radio Dials' "Doodlesocker Dribbles" wrote an intriguing story of Ford. In summary, Mr. Teneyck is at a restaurant to order dinner.* While he is there; the radio is on and grandfather's show is being broadcast. The restaurant is very populated and the staff is bustling about. All of a sudden the activity stops, workers stop working, people stop eating, and everyone is focused on grandfather's words. At the end of his "statements" all goes back to usual. "Old Man Sunshine,", aka Ford Rush is once again a household name.

During the early thirties, Wheatena published a booklet showing Ford as "Ye Happy Minstrel." That booklet contains stories of "Troubadours of Yesterday and Today," "History of the Black Minstrel" and a section of cut-out paper dolls, based on the Alice and Wonderland characters. Ford Rush was the author of several of those writings and my dad, Ford Rush Jr. is in the story-pictures for "Baseball tips." (Back in the day, Dad was a minor league player.)

Ford Sr. was performing with Pat Shavalon over WCAU radio while Ford Rush Jr. made his debut at age 14 on WFBE radio.

In May, 1932, *Variety Magazine* listed the top twelve radio programs by location. Under Midwestern programs Ford Rush held three of the top spots. In 1934, radio schedules show Ford working with Ralph Waldo Emerson on a regular basis. The 1936 *WLS Family album* lists Ford as an announcer, program director, and soloist. It also states that in 1932 he was on the *Prairie Farmer* staff. *Variety* wrote about Ford's success at WLS. In 1937 Variety found Ford Rush Senior and Junior at WGY in New York. They combined cooking, performing music, and laughter on "The

Kitchen Show." A WGY advertisement picked it as their number one show. *Radio Daily* dubbed Ford Sr. as a "song philosopher" while Ford Rush Jr. aka "Silent Slim," was written up as talking with his guitar strings more than his mouth. Ford Jr., gave the short "straight-man" response to Ford Sr.'s jokes, using words and/or music.

During 1938 the two Ford's popularity grew as a more "home-grown, musically talented population" began following their shows, especially the "Search for Talent" and "Fiddler's Contests" that Ford Sr. and Jr. held. On May 4, 1938, it was announced that Ford Rush Sr. would be in charge of the talent at the Boonville Fair. Bradley Kincaid was a major attraction at that event. Ford Jr. was predominantly in charge of the "Search for Talent" contest while, Ford Sr. ran a "Fiddlers Contest." As 1939 approached, the two Fords were performing and holding "Search for Talent" contests at various parks throughout Nashville. They performed on WSM, at the Grand Ole Opry Opry and on the National Barn Dance at WLS in Chicago.

Throughout the years, Ford Rush Sr. was listed many times and by many authors as "an originator" of the National Barn Dance. Like "Billy Hill," the "National Barn Dance" was not a familiar name to me until 1966 when my grandfather came to live with us. Our family talked a lot about the Opry and the folks there, but the National Barn Dance was never mentioned in our household. During a welcome party for grandfather, at our home in Foxboro, Massachusetts., my mother told me that it was "because they never gave him (Ford Sr.) credit for all the work he did." No one ever talked about "the work" either until grandfather's death. A survey of period radio schedules, news stories, audible broadcasted interviews with Ford and Glenn, and family stories shows the statement "an originator of the National Barn Dance" to be true.

Ford Sr. became a Grand Ole Opry member during the 1930's. Ford Sr. and Jr. began broadcasting over WSM and performed on the Opry. In 1938, a WSM Birthday celebration list includes Ford Sr. As the 1940's approached, Ford Rush Sr. was known as "The Singing High Sheriff of the Grand Ole' Opry." He performed on the Grand Ole' Opry in five of the six venues where the Opry was held: National Life and Accident Insurance. Co. studio, the Hillsboro Theater, Dixie Tabernacle, War Memorial, and the Ryman Auditorium. He did not perform on the current Opry stage because he passed away in December, 1966. It was very daunting to visit the Opry of today and stand in the circle that both Ford Sr. and Ford Jr. had performed from.

During the 1940's Ford Rush Jr. performed with Pee Wee King, Roy Acuff and the Smokey Mountain Boys, as well as writing arrangements of Roy Acuff's music. The two Ford's, father and son, traveled and were members of the Prince Albert Tobacco Show, as well as "The Camel Caravan." In 1946, Ford Sr. was Roy Acuff's "Personal Representative," while both Fords traveled with a group of Opry performers and performed on 206 shows across sixteen states. They drove the whole way.

The research and writing of my grandfather's life and career is not over. There are stories to tell so I hope this overview of his success interests you. He was a household name many times over in his career, which continued well into the late 1950's. His influence on Country and Gospel music was not that he composed a particular song, or played a particular instrument in a particular way. He was a talented, outstanding singer who used his talking voice to persuade. We can hear his views clearly in a 1942 interview with J. Bunker of *the Kentucky Courier Journal,* titled "Ford Rush, "the daddy" of all barn dances"

"Those so called Hillbilly tunes" says Mr. Rush, "are the real American folk music, and the old songs and humor of the

Saturday night Barn dances attract one of the most ardent and faithful audiences on radio."

"Most audiences are appreciative," he says "but the folks who follow our "Grand Ole'Opry, The National Barn Dance, and the Renfro Valley Programs are downright demonstrative. They come hundreds of miles to hear and see their favorite stars perform in person."

End Notes

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WEB WWW.opry.com : listing of Grand Old Opry locations and years WEB: WWW.newspapers.com : The Courier-Journal, Louisville Kentucky, June 6, 1942, pg.23

The Lavender Cowboy in the Modernist City: Gene Autry and *The Phantom Empire* (1935)

By Guerric DeBona, OSB
Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology

In her best selling book, *White Trash: The 400 Year Untold History of Class in America*, Nancy Isenberg persuasively argues that we have ignored class divisions in America, hidden in plain sight since the colonial period. How can we begin to understand these divisions and where can we turn to discover artifacts that might enlighten the subject? One place might be Hollywood's representation of emerging country music of the 1930s, when viewed particularly from the perspective of modernity, class and mass culture. Conflicting discourses that emerged during the Great Depression, especially when it comes to left and right, intellectuals and populism, highbrow and lowbrow, and surface in an interesting way in American film culture, whose narratives helped to mediate these anxieties centered around an encroaching fear of modernity. Until recently, however, the contribution of the B-Western to assuaging these tensions has gone fairly unexamined, along with its erstwhile hero, the singing cowboy. I hope to add to the recent work in this area with a brief look at a popular serial western and its most prominent singing cowboy in the 1930s. What can we learn today about the function of country music during this period that might disclose some current divisions in the 21st Century?

Nobody could have ever predicted the many lives of the Hollywood Western or its importance to understanding American

life. Broadly speaking, early silent westerns were historical fantasies and drew deeply from a popularization of Rousseau's "noble savage," the American Transcendentalists (a Romanic ideal largely disseminated in the novels of James Fennimore Cooper and culminating in Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, 1902), and a myth of the frontier as the "wild west." After the standardization of the genre—less than a decade after *The Great Train Robbery* (1903)—American culture's rewriting of history, representation of Native Americans and the entitlement to land appropriation would become the subject of countless narratives, fully a fifth of all U.S. releases (21 per cent) by 1910. As film technology improved during the silent era, Hollywood would exploit the discourse on the invention of the American west to its advantage, especially when it came to the obvious production values inherent in the action film and its masculine star hero; in so doing, these films recycled and invigorated Western frontier mythology. According to Scott Simmon, "among Hollywood genres, the Western is far and away the most comfortable propounding ideas about American historical and political life."

At the same time, however, these big budget A-Westerns arguably promoted a mythology and a history lesson that "never follow through to its implications" because the films set up "a dialogue about the nature of American history and the relationship of that history to contemporary life that it proved so completely ill-equipped to resolve." That resolution of often contradictory myths about the West and governing narrative principles of what Simmon calls "the eastern western," was largely impossible to solve for a variety of reasons, among them the cinematic genre's own limitations, together with the rewriting of history in a plot that was necessarily formulaic. These conflicts almost certainly helped to canonize films like *The Iron Horse* (1924) and *Stagecoach* (1939), as well as place their director, John Ford,

into the pantheon of auteurs. Indeed, A-list westerns were readily able to link celebrity power and promotion with the genre. (Who can forget the star-making tracking shot of John Wayne as Ringo when we first see him introduced, rifle in hand, in *Stagecoach*?) But these "classic" western features were only half the story, especially when we view the Western from the lens of the 1930's, the emergence of the B-Western—and the singing cowboy.

Peter Stanfield, Scott Simmon, Don Cusic and others have argued persuasively for the B-Western and the singing cowboy film in particular as a window into American life and as an instrument of cultural negotiations during the Great Depression. B-films were able to mediate class and economic tensions in ways that A-feature westerns were not, for a variety of reasons. As Cusic writes, "The films of Gene Autry and Roy Rogers presented a West that was both new and old, contemporary and the Wild West. During the 1930s there were strong elements of the 'old' West still alive and well, but the West was becoming more modern, joining the twentieth century. It was a West where the barren lands got water from Dams constructed during the new Deal and that benefited from the national government's investments in the region. The singing Cowboy movies, particularly those of Autry and Rogers, demonstrated those changes." As Simmon writes, unlike A-list westerns that slog, "through its histories of nineteenth-century pioneers, while demanding, in ponderous dialogue and heavy symbols acknowledgement of the value of their achievements for twentieth-century descendants. The decade's B-Westerns make that argument by leaping across the years. In these B-films, the nineteenth century generally solves the problems of the twentieth, the past usually resolves the conflicts of the present, country sets straight the confusions of the city."

I would like to particularize this discussion somewhat from the perspective of film and cultural studies, by examining singing

cowboy and country music star Gene Autry's first leading role from the lens of modernity and mass culture. *The Phantom Empire* (1935), directed by Otto Brower and B. Reeves Eason and produced by Nat Levine Poverty Row Mascot studio as a 12-episode serial became what Blair Davis calls a "genre amalgamation" of musical, western and science fiction genres of the 1930s." In addition to the confluence of genres, though, *The Phantom Empire* demonstrates the ability of mass culture to function as a liberating instrument during the Great Depression. Along these lines, I would like to suggest that there are six artistic, modernist cultures coursing in various ways through *The Phantom Empire* which help us to underline the cultural and class division present in the 1930s and which the star of that film helps to negotiate through plot, character and song: high art; modernist art; avant-garde art; folk art; popular art; mass art.

How do these modernist discourses work and how are they resolved? Sometimes these versions of modernism work in opposition to one another and are eventually resolved; other times they are not. "They partake of one another, sometimes, like figures on a chessboard, living in antagonistic relation. They could be described as mental constructs, or, in Foucault's language, as discursive fields. But even if they're only ideas, they constitute a network of real social power; and because their names occur frequently in the writings of historians and theorists, they have a certain heuristic value." With Modernism rising more and more during the 1920s and 1930s, mass culture (particularly the action serial of the B-film) and its stars played key roles in mollifying the anxieties present in American culture. "Although an action serial aimed at young audiences in small-town America, *The Phantom Empire* nevertheless tapped into widespread insecurities regarding modernity. Ultimately, the easygoing Autry is able to save the surface people from the most dangerous implications of

technology, while embracing such aspects of the modern world as recorded sound, radio and even television, which wired the West and connect it to the outside world." My intention for the remainder of this article is to explore these various conflicting discourses in *The Phantom Empire* and suggest particular ways that Autry negotiates these tensions as a singing cowboy. Along the way I will make some parallels to the films of Tex Ritter, whose career lagged behind Autry but whose role as a singing cowboy presents some interesting parallels to Autry's as a mediator of cultural modernism.

High Art: The Elitist Intellectual

The Phantom Empire is as far from a highbrow art house film as anyone could imagine. After all, the 12-chapter serial was B-movie entertainment whose viewership thrived in popular spectatorship, and the kind of entertainment that critics such as Dwight MacDonald would have detested as mindless distraction and useless drivel. From the perspective of even middlebrow art proponents, B-films were barnacles the industry attached to decaying mass culture. In Chicago, for instance, the film appeared as a double bill with the Shirley Temple feature musical comedy *The Little Colonel* (1935) at one theater. Across town, it twinned with a romantic drama in another movie house and with a mystery-thriller in still another. At the same time, however, there are elements of high art present in the film that clearly function as binary oppositions in order to underline the contrast between them both, or what could be called a highbrow/lowbrow showdown. In this regard, it would be difficult to view the film and not find some reminder of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), showcasing the modern city run amok, and which would become the quintessential art film and illustrative of German Expressionism that still finds a place today in the cineaste theater today. In fact, Hollywood had its

own middlebrow version of German Expressionism, which entered the industry with German emigrants, like Lang and F.W. Murnau, whose first American film, *Sunrise* (1927) became emblematic of the Hollywood appropriation of high art. John Ford's time in Fox studios shared some contact with European emigrants who would later influence Ford's experimentation his noir-ish films of the 1930s, such as *The Informer* and *The Long Voyage Home*. *The Phantom Empire*, on the other hand, shows no signs of such *integration* of German Expressionism; quite the contrary: high art deliberately stands as a foil to folk or popular art, the modern city to the rural ranch. Indeed, the "Scientific City of Murania," whose architecture and mechanization may gesture toward a kind of low grade "Metropolis" on a very strict budget, represents the precise inversion of Gene Autry's Radio Ranch; this dyad underscores the ideological functions of both habitations, and, as we shall see, makes Autry's character and his songs as a singing cowboy a crucial and pivotal intermediary between the two worlds.

High art is isolated, elitist and untouchable as it unfolds in Murania. It is a city carefully estranged from the masses, even as it defines itself apart. As James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger have pointed out, high art has its origin in the European (monarchical) court tradition and when the standard became a bourgeois practice and its site was the city, "where it had the effect of mapping empires, forging national identities, and subtly maintaining the authority of aristocrats over their most powerful subjects." And indeed, Queen Tika in regal attire rules the metropolis of Murania in *The Phantom Empire* as an autocratic dictator; her pedigree and origins are clearly imperious and could not be further from democracy (or, for that matter, the New Deal of the 1930s). She sits upon a throne in a palace; her interests are entirely nationalistic and her methodology remains ruthlessly authoritarian throughout the serial. She executes anyone

who disappoints her. Her subjects are an entirely male population, like a queen bee governing a hive of obedient, subservient drones. Queen Tika speaks with an affected accent and her subjects dress in medieval attire and ride horses in battalions, like Renaissance warriors. Additionally, the landscape of Murania is somewhat reminiscent of Art Deco style modernist architecture, which emerged in the mid-1920s and lasted until the beginning of the Second World War. The illuminated Art Deco design hints at the science fiction genre in which the film participates (and for which it would become a blueprint for future serials) and somewhat veils the elitist aspects of the urban monarchical citadel.

Murania begins to take on the characteristics of high culture and its expression in high modernism, as Matthew Arnold, who was enormously influential to constructing an American hierarchy, would articulate these values in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). As Lawrence W. Levine reads Arnold, the 19th century critic chose adjectives like "higher" and "lower," or "pure" and "popular" hardly by accident. "They clustered around a congeries of values, a set of categories that defined and distinguished culture vertically, that created hierarchies which were to remain meaningful for much of this century."

Such opposition plays itself out most obviously in the polarized worlds of Murania and the Radio Ranch, Queen Tika and Gene Autry. After viewing the Radio Ranch and activities of the people who live on the surface through her video screen, Queen Tika arrogantly boasts, "How fortunate we are with our advance science, our superior mentality." Like Arnold's characterization of the English nobility who distained their youthful past, Murania is a world of adults only, royal guards and courtiers who operate by laws and rituals as they would in a European court. By contrast, Autry's world is spontaneous and saturated with folk songs and, of course, the radio. Autry's first number is a romp

through a barnyard ("Uncle Noah's Ark"), filled with vaudeville humor and child-like characterizations and vulgar animal noises. Further, the Ranch is made up largely of children, musicians and string bands, who gather around a democratic ideal (the kids hold elections and vote!) and brought together by festive song on the radio. Murania and its inhabitants are the result of an education without soul, a populous which evolved because of cultivated and careful education, free from the contamination of Gene Autry and his Radio Ranch—which is to say, mass culture, democracy and lowbrow entertainment. There is no diegetic music in Murania, only a rather ominous non-diegetic soundtrack lurking the background. The opening opposition between these two worlds that are literally geographically polarized underlines the democratization of country music as an American expression, quite apart from its monarchical and oppressive inversion in Murania. As we shall see, the diegetic music at the Ranch has its own part to play, as the singing cowboy brings together the folk and democratic tradition in opposition to the modern city.

That said, the singing cowboy not only stands in opposition, but will find himself with a foot in the other world as well. As the film unfolds Autry works his way back and forth between the Ranch and Murania, as if to clear a safe passageway between highbrow and lowbrow culture. After all, the singing cowboy must retrieve something from modernity, specifically a technology that will mass-ify country music. Further, Autry is not alone when it comes to inhabiting these two worlds. The hint of a high art culture (and its antithesis) in B-Westerns emerges in at least two of Tex Ritter's films as well where Ritter also steps into both worlds. In his first feature for Grand National, *Song of the Gringo* (1936), Tex infiltrates a gang in order to solve a murder and finds himself hiding in a Spanish villa, whose timid patriarch plays chess and where his daughter, a young woman dressed in European

elegance prays devoutly to the Virgin Mary. These Continental trappings of highbrow culture, with its paintings and elaborate furnishings, serve to contrast the rather unsophisticated Tex, who sneaks into the house during a storm looking rough and bearded. His love interest is part of this more refined world which must become integrated. More revelatory, perhaps, in *Arizona Days* (1936), Tex appropriates himself as a popular singer to Professor McGill, a rather washed up Shakespearian actor who now takes a minstrel show on the road. In a little bit of aping from Autry's first feature, *Tumbling Tumbleweeds*, the film clearly burlesques highbrow affectation when the Professor gives a pep talk to one of Tex's sidekicks: "My good man, I am a thespian . . . nothing is impossible." McGill moments later critiques the terrible trombone playing, saying "I think you need a little more practice. . . . Just a little more practice." Meanwhile, Tex carries on with his folk ballads and parlor guitar. While visiting the world of high art the singing cowboy clearly fits into the world of popular art and returns to it, like the center of gravity.

The Language of Purity: Modernist Art

Murania is a city in which language and architecture speaks modernity, much of whose underlying ideology remains a product of the Enlightenment. The city's architecture seems like an illumination of the sleek modernism that would come to dominate the design of buildings in America before and after World War II. Thunderous symphonic chords accompany the first revelation of the city when we first glimpse its cylindrical and electric shapes. As ruled by Queen Tika, Murania represents the outcome of progress, a blueprint plan designed by a civilization of over-reachers, eventually doomed for self-destruction. The moving sidewalks are the signs of progress for a city that never sleeps and where scientific research governs the practical details

and improvements in modern living. We know from the plot that city harbors the coveted Radium resources for further scientific development and provides the enticement for Professor Beetson and the other unscrupulous and greedy scientists. In the film's cultural context of the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed that financial disaster, the will to power and financial corruption has its inevitable outcome: the narrative reflects the growing anxiety concerning modernism in the context of the economic turmoil of the 1930s, together with the ideation of a pure civilization and the threat of fascism and the birth of the atomic age. As Ron Briley rightly suggests, "The implications of the *Frankenstein* myth are quite evident in *The Phantom Empire*, and it seems safe to assume that these perceptions resonated with viewers in a world drifting toward global conflict with dictators and military regimes promising security through territorial expansion. Furthermore, new technologies made it possible for planes to rain destruction from the skies, and civilian populations removed from the battlefield were no longer safe . . . the Muranians' reliance upon radium leads them to construct a weapon that proves to be their ultimate undoing."

The all male population (excepting the Queen) suggests a city without fecundity, as if modernity has already carried out a kind of post-atomic catastrophe, resulting in a sterile civilization without humanism, love or reproduction. In the city of Murania the men are slaves of the Queen and live in a kind of robotic trance of the status quo until they instigate their rebellion. But even in a revolution (somewhat resonant of a Renaissance treasonous plot) it seems as if this is yet another barbaric will to power or ambition meant to disclose the interest in establishing a patriarchal substitute for a tyrannical matriarchy. The robots, ubiquitous throughout the film, recall the automation of which modernity was a part and which threatened to undermine American freedom, the national

economy and its jobs and perhaps dismantle agrarian culture altogether.

As others have noted, *The Phantom Empire* would set the stage for future sci-fi fantasy, with serials such as *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe*, (1940), complete with its rather Wagnerian and triumphant soundtrack. But unlike its science fiction progeny, the amalgamation of genres in *The Phantom Empire* is meant to suggest an alternative universe in contrast with a viable alternative, a binary inversion between a modernist nightmare and a rural ideal, Murania and the Radio Ranch. The signification of science in Murania is not wonder but progress that leads to destruction; the Ranch is a place of musical theater, which articulates a humanist vision and led by the singing cowboy, Gene Autry. We know that B-Westerns were designed for and extremely popular in small rural communities, where the obvious fear of modernity, the city and the financial threat from both of these entities were present throughout the 1930s. Free from the blight of urbanization and Wall Street, rural spectators viewed the singing cowboy film as an extension of themselves. As Peter Stanfield reminds us, when it came to the singing cowboy western, Autry represented "men women and children who frequented small town, rural and neighborhood theaters, working class families who wanted a magical fairy tale transformation of familiar landscapes and characters. This is primarily the world that the series Westerns gave them, a world where conflicts between labour and capital are resolved in favor of the working man and woman."

As the singing cowboy, Autry offers his radio broadcast as something like a Greek chorus, commenting on the refuge of rural life and bucolic ideals away from urbanization. Indeed, the first production number (about which I will have more to say later) cuts to a comic array of barnyard animals, as if to enumerate the virtues of life on the ranch and the rural community more generally. To

this end, the singing cowboy offered hope by espousing the values of the New Deal, especially for rural landowners, together with its public work projects like the WPA and FDR's Good Neighbor Policy (which will be a subject for later Autry films, like *South of the Boarder* in 1939). Indeed, the genre even generated tourism and perhaps national pride during the Great Depression. As Don Cusic writes, "The Singing Cowboy pictures were set in the West and although the films were in black and white, the grandeur of the West is captured. Seeing the West on the silver screen inspired many young boys and girls to grow up wanting to become cowboys and cowgirls and to visit the West. For the Dad's and Mom's who saw those westerns, it often planted a desire to see the West." As Autry reflected on his career in his autobiography, "while my solutions were a little less complex than those offered by the FBI, and my methods a bit more direct, I played a kind of New Deal cowboy who never hesitated to tackle many of the same problems: the dustbowl, unemployment, or the harnessing of power. This may have contributed to my popularity with the 1930's audience."

Autry is not alone in helping to resolve the plot in *The Phantom Empire*. Those who undermine Murania and modernism are the opposite of the sophistications of the city and the will to power: children. Frankie and Betsey are instruments for Gene when he is disabled or otherwise unconscious, and the children who form their own version of the Thunder Riders and form a rescue squad (democratically choosing a motto—"To the Rescue"). At the same time, the Radio Ranch is not empty of scientific inquiry; it just puts such investigations together for the common good, like the New Deal itself. Frankie has a secret laboratory and the draconian Professor Beetson praises the young man for his "perfect" knowledge of radio waves. But Frankie and Betsey's bring not elitist or Fordism attitudes and commerce (or Futurist robots), but communitarian and humanist rural values to the people of the Ranch.

The Avant-Garde: The City on the Hill—or Below the Surface

Surrealism was part of the historical avant-garde of modernism that emerged in Europe in the early 1920's, with works by Salvador Dali, Man Ray and Luis Bunuel and others. A central objective of the surrealists was to reveal the bourgeoisification of culture by cracking the veneer of civilization. Although surrealism was an artistic movement under the umbrella of modernism, the obvious touchstone figure was not an artist but Sigmund Freud. Like Freud, the surrealists sought to bring the individual and collective unconsciousness to the surface in the context of everyday life. The surrealist movement would eventually be mainstreamed by Hollywood, most obviously with directors like Alfred Hitchcock who used Dali to do the dreamscapes in his film, *Spellbound* (1945), and who hints at the perverse unconscious by the discovery of Norman Bates's "mother" in the basement. It should be fairly obvious that there is more than a small element of surrealism in *The Phantom Empire*. Scott Simmon argues that the B-Western rambles into surrealism more generally, upending the conventional historical narrative of the A-Western. "Approached logically, B-Westerns seem irresponsibly cavalier about the era in which they are set. Some B-Westerns with a little punch of surprise, as in that 1939 version of *The New Frontier*, with its joke about the Indians who turn out to be disguised white townsfolk. But B-Westerns usually play any leap in eras with a straight face."

In some sense, the city of Murania is literally a buried collective unconscious that Autry himself brings to the surface. How phantom an empire we might ask? Gene Autry's only real "love interest"—and I use that word guardedly and very carefully—is Queen Tika. The unlikely pairing of the monarch and the spokesman for the New Deal deliberately remains antagonistic, threateningly sexual and in tension throughout the series (all the

more so for the hero's identification for the young boys at the Saturday matinee). But there is something very surrealistic about Autry's ambivalent adolescent sexual curiosity that longs to be brought to the surface in this weird matching between Autry and the Queen. Interestingly enough, the film uses Autry to its advantage especially as a "romantic" lead, because the producer, Nat Levine did not think Autry was masculine enough. Perhaps the surrealistic effect of the film played also to the dormant sexual feelings of early and middle adolescents in the theater and their sexual ambivalence toward the opposite sex. As we have seen, mass culture is all about negotiating anxiety and sexuality was not exception: the fears of the 1930s were meant to be accessed by this world of science fiction—its power hungry civilization and radioactive elements—and subsequently calmed and negotiated by a musical troubadour. Autry may scratch the surface of latent sexuality, even as he assuages more social tensions of modernity. The role of the singing cowboy as one who participates in a surrealistic narrative is very interesting and provocative, and would not be the first a singing troubadour poetically tapped into the heart of love.

Additionally, Murania is also a place of dreams that are accessible by a fantastic television-like video machine. History is replayed as a bad dream and not, as in A-Westerns, part of a national mythology. The Thunder Riders who furiously come and go from Murania are reminiscent of the KKK; the futuristic city and its movements toward automation seem incongruous with a murderous and racist cult. But the pairing of white supremacists and modernist over-reachers may not be that unusual for the surrealist aspect of *The Phantom Empire*. Perhaps the film may be hinting at racial tensions and modernity, or the grotesque side of a progressive modernism that moves toward fanatical racial purity as in the National Socialism of the Third Reich.

Autry is just the most obvious example of the way that the singing cowboy explores the collective unconscious and helps to reconcile conflicts. Like Orpheus, who was the mythical god and journeyman who descended into the underworld to rescue his Eurydice, Autry leaves the world of the Ranch and its link to real time, only to navigate into the depths of Murania which are unknown, threatening and darkly modernistic. But Tex Ritter also serves to bring a buried unconscious to the service as well. In the S*ong of the Gringo*, for instance, a hostile group of outlaws seeks to destroy him and stand at the ready to do him in. He confronts the murderous band out to get him like a prophet with a parlor guitar and sings the murder ballad "Sam Hall": "Well, my name it is Sam Hall, Sam Hall/. Yes, my name it is Sam Hall, it is Sam Hall/. My name it is Sam Hall an' I hate you, one and all/. An' I hate you, one and all/ Damn your eyes." The song gives voice to the hostility in the group (and even the singing cowboy himself), scratching the veneer of the moment and suggests the ability of the singing cowboy to cut through deception and the dark artifice associated with the gang and its money interested sponsor. The singing cowboy and his songs raise the unconscious of other characters and of the spectator as well; these ballads suggest the power of country music to penetrate deep feelings and dramatic situations with the troubadour cowboy as prophet.

Down at the Ranch: Folk Art and the Singing Cowboy's Style

This fourth category of modernism (together with the next two) initiates what some might refer to as the lowbrow inversion of the previous three categories. Now the ideation of pre-industrial communities is as old as the Industrial Revolution itself. The logical outcome of capitalism, progressive Arnoldian ideals, the Industrial Revolution, the high tech city and science without humanism is

a city like Murania. That doomed landscape is what sociologist Howard Odum might have called a "super-civilization," since it "stands in many bold contrasts to culture: superstate over . . . the folk and learning; organization over people, mass over individual, power over freedom, machines over men, quantity over quality, artificial over natural, technology over human, production over reproduction. The verdict is one for too much civilization and too little culture." A popularization of local art began in England with the so-called "Arts and Crafts movement" in the mid-19th century and moved to Continental Europe and the United States. Weary of the bourgeois, massified and non-original effects of industrialized art, the emergent interest in what we now call a folk tradition looked elsewhere for sweetness and light. In his fine work on the culture of the 1930s, Richard Pells argues that the key problem of modern life in that decade was not just economic but culture versus civilization. "This state of mind accounted for an extraordinary interest in folk cultures, agrarian communities, and peasant life that sprang up in the early 1930's." Painters turned to primitive art and native landscapes of "untouched" pueblos of Mexico or the islands of the Caribbean. Early in the 20th century, music was drawing from these folk cultures, with Aaron Copland importing folk melodies from Appalachia for his symphonies, or Bela Bartok instrumentalizing indigenous music from Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria or other countries. A young Allen Lomax partnered with his father to collect regional music for the Library of Congress resulting in *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934) and *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly* (1936).

Country music already had a secure foothold in American rural culture by the 1920's with the likes of the Carter family, Jimmie Rodgers and the new tradition of the singing cowboys. Autry, who consciously imitated Jimmie Rogers early in his career, embodied the Hollywoodization of this emergent subculture. Hollywood's

love affair with the modernist folk tradition in just about every genre is well known. African-Americans played no small role in Hollywood's folk tradition, staring in jazzy all black musicals such as *Hallelujah* (1929) and *Cabin in the Sky* (1943). Pianist Dooley Wilson famously played Rick Blaine's sidekick in *Casablanca* (1942). As comic relief among a gaggle of sidekicks, tap-dancing Eightball is a member of Autry's medicine show in *Tumbling Tumbleweeds*. Not surprisingly, Tex Ritter's singing cowboy rings out the old ballad, the "Boweevil Blues" song (which was recorded by Leadbelly and captured by Lomax in 1934) in *Riders of the Frontier* (1939) with an African-American actor, Mantan Moreland as a cook and sidekick in this production number. And *Trouble in Texas* (1937) integrates some documentary footage of Native Americans in traditional garb at a large rodeo/festival.

But the singing cowboy's role as folk hero would be seminal to the plot of B-Westerns. With a folk appeal to a variety of musical and filmic audience, it should be easy to see why Hollywood, especially the Poverty Row studios, was enamored with the B-Western and with the singing cowboy more particularly. B-westerns were "quickies" to produce and intentionally shot in the present to avoid big budgets and high cost sets and costumes. Folk songs were cheaply done and did not involve elaborate choreography or sound production techniques. B-Westerns in general did not involve expensive camera shots (a problem for the sound film more generally in the early years) or process shots and could mike a singing cowboy like Autry very easily performing in place with either a boom mike or one hidden in a prop. A typical budget for a B-Western, according to Tino Balio was anywhere from $5,000 to $20,000 and several western cowboy's were engaged for a six-picture deal at $1,000 a picture. With this in mind, Autry and his fellow singing cowboys were a bargain. His first feature film for Republic, *Tumbling Tumbleweeds* (1935) "was made for less than

$18,000 and eventually grossed over $1 million . . . Named for one of Autry's most popular songs, *Tumbling Tumbleweeds* led the new form of the singing Western to such a wide success that Republic soon introduced an equally popular rival, Roy Rogers."

Folk music added a difference in to the musical genre. Autry's place in the singing cowboy Western was not a duplication of integrative musicals, which organically arise from the circumstances of plot and character, "Autry's films frame it explicitly as musical performance . . [and] that there is a marked difference between westerns in which cowboys sing and the singing western proper, which rests upon a highly distinctive reflexivity in the representation of musical performance. . . in singing westerns is a commonplace act that calls attention to the social bond between the entertainer and his audience. The singing cowboy comes from and speaks to a commonality; he is in partnership with rather than set apart from, his audience." This social bond between Autry and the audience in *The Phantom Empire* could not be more obvious from the first time we see Autry and his string band performing as the Radio Riders at the Radio Ranch at the beginning of the film. Country music and its rising star becomes a kind of fulcrum for establishing a significant relationship with the audience, all the more of a contrast to the distant world of Murania.

Let me say more about this fascinating bond between the singing cowboy and his audience. Chapter one introduces Autry and his band and begins as an action sequence, in which Gene and the Radio Riders capture a stagecoach filled with instruments so that they can perform for the radio "Uncle Noah's Ark." Autry announces the "social bond," in fact, when he tells the radio audience that, "we are about to bust into your homes." The film cuts between Autry and some barnyard animals, the ubiquitous Smiley Burnett and the other sidekicks in the film. But most indicative of the deliberate relational strategy when filming the

singing cowboy is this: Autry's close-ups allow for the screen audience to participate in a variety of very expressive headshots of the performer, disproportionate to the film's audience on the porch of the Radio Ranch. We are granted an intimacy with the performer from the start of the film. In other words, the cinematic spectator and the little crowd at the Radio Ranch merge as a social unit: the folk world of the ranch becomes our world, together with the comedic characters who showcase the performance Autry himself. "Uncle Noah's Ark" became a favorite for Autry fans and was reprised with Burnette for Republic's production of *Round-Up Time in Texas* in 1937. There was an intimacy established with folk modernism that tied this popular discourse directly to the rural audience and had the added feature of growing a fan base for Autry, even as his devotees sought to reproduce their experience of the film later in audio recordings. Needless to say, the artificial and cold world of Murania and the icy Queen Tika are a deliberate foil to folk intimacy and authenticity of Autry and the Ranch.

Popular Art: Radio and the Ranch and the Singing Cowboy

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of popular radio in 1930s America as a social tool and radio performers as instruments of transformation. The period of the Great Depression disclosed numerous anxieties, none so great as the fear of societal fracture. The radio in the 1930s got the nation through a crisis it never faced before. "Although the ravages of the Depression reached far and wide throughout society, there was nevertheless a fear that new social divides would open up or exacerbate existing ones. In various ways, and to various political ends, radio was seized upon as a tool that could bind the various constituents of the nation together, whenever there were and whatever their circumstances. The radio was, for example, more than many other cultural forms,

available to those still working and the unemployed alike." But according to Bruce Lenthall, radio's popularity was the source of consternation to the public intellectual of the 1930's, who feared American broadcasting's effect on the population. "Radio was a vehicle, perhaps the leading vehicle, of mass culture in the 1930's. For many public intellectuals, that prodded their criticism of the medium. They disliked and feared mass culture. The commercial nature of radio forced broadcasters to appeal to broad audiences. In doing so, this array of thinkers asserted, radio transformed diverse groups of humanity into a collective audience that denied the distinctive and had no use for creative or intellectual advance." For these intellectuals who could, incidentally, be positioned on the other side of modernity as "high art" critics, radio and mass culture in general perpetuated the problem of what Matthew Arnold called "the populous" doing what it pleases. "They recognized that radio's commercial nature made it a vehicle of mass culture—and because of this, they saw little hope for American broadcasting."

The narrative dynamics of *The Phantom Empire* draws from this tension present in the 1930s between highbrow and lowbrow, together with the cultural attitudes inherent in radio broadcasting as a vehicle for mass communication. To a great extent, *The Phantom Empire* revolves around the importance of radio and showcases its production through Gene Autry, the star of the Radio Ranch. As the owner of the Radio Ranch tells Autry, "Boy is our ranch popular. And all because of your broadcasts." The power of advertising (obviously derided by intellectuals as the mass-ified machinations of radio), was capable of disseminating a wide amount of product information in ways that would have been impossible before. Radio brought a fractious society together in one living room, and increased the access of remote rural communities to a national conversation of entertainment, news and FDR's "Fireside Chats." At the same time, the rural

world of Gene Autry, the Radio Ranch and the country music radiobroadcasts stands in stark contrast to the elitist city. Later, Professor Beetson says that Autry makes the Radio Ranch "popular." Without him, the place would soon become deserted. The object then becomes to get rid of Autry so that the Radio Ranch would be unpopular and deserted, clearing the way for excavations for Radium. Popularity for both the radio and its star is a key feature of the plot because it is the popular precisely as mass culture, which secures both information and perpetuates interest. The intellectual like Beetson knows exactly how to sabotage mass culture: by removing the celebrity from the mike.

While the Radio Ranch thrives on the wide transmission of information and entertainment, Murania, the scientific city, holds a tight aegis over its communication. In contrast to Autry's singing cowboy, with his congenial air and intimate relationship with the viewer, Queen Tika looks into her video screen like a sorceress conjuring a spell on her victims. In a series of unusual camera shots, the Queen looks directly and very sternly into the camera, breaking the "fourth wall" of the cinema, a severe contrast to Autry's charismatic smile and musical appeal, drawing in the spectator with an oblique series of standard Hollywood shots. The film continues to position Queen Tika as anti-entertainment, an enemy to mass culture. Having seen horse races, boxing matches, car races and other visions of contemporary life she says that, "The world today is a mad house. We are fortunate in Murania." The characterization hints at censorship and a control of information. As the Empress of a lost civilization, she alone is privy to the news and her video oracles, unless she cares to share it with her chosen and exclusive band of warriors who do her bidding in her control room. When one of the scientists inadvertently stumbles on the threshold of Murania, the Queen is horrified. "Surface men in our Garden of Life. It has never happened before and it will never

happen again." Much like the relationship between mass culture and intellectuals of the 1930s, the very air of the surface world is deadly, suffocating and contaminating to the rarified atmosphere of the citizens of Murania. The people of Murania literally die from breathing the surface air. The habitat of the popular is poisonous to those of the modernist city.

The junior radio pioneer, Frankie (who has a "perfect understanding of radio beams") makes use of his secret laboratory and poaches parts such as cathode ray tubes from the radio engineer to build "a direction finder" in order to discover just where the origin of a radio transmission might be. When the direction finder stands on his head, Frankie and Betsey tell Gene that the signals might indicate a civilization under the earth. But this is just one of many examples in the plot in which popular radio will be the undoing of the modern city. The importance of radio is suggested throughout the plot, not surprisingly, especially given the radio's role in rural America. Feigning interest in an archeological discovery of an idol in a nearby gulley, the scientists convince Gene to show them where they might find the origins of a cultural find associated with such a city under the earth. He does so on the condition that he return at two o'clock, just in time for his radio broadcast. To fail to do so would mean that he would lose his contract. And sure enough, having been shot at, thrown from his horse, knocked unconscious lost and almost burned by his own campfire, the show goes on. After Frankie and Betsey rescue Gene, his one concern is getting back in time for the broadcast. And if he fails to perform, they will lose Radio Ranch. For several chapters in the series, the plot hangs on the crucial reality of maintaining the broadcast—or else. Radio has big stakes. So does losing the Ranch, a fear that must have had a lot of reverberations in the 1930s as people were in jeopardy of losing their homes and livelihood. Popular radio and Gene Autry helped negotiate those anxieties, even as radio

itself was an agent of unification for a divided nation and a lifeline to isolated rural towns.

Mass Art and the Songs of the Cowboy

The popular discourses diffused in modernity comprise a variety of expressions: American cinema, network radio and popular "pulp" fiction and magazines make up a massification of art in the context of the 1930s. "These were the institutions comprising what Horkeimer and Adorno [members of the Frankfurt School] labeled the culture industry—the manufacturers of Kitsch, a German word meaning 'trash' or 'rubbish." Murania represents the robotization or Fordism of modernity, the place of automation and sterilization, enhanced by an Arnoldian, European sensibility with overtones of European monarchy. Although Gene Autry's Radio Ranch's radio culture certainly suggests and promotes the values of popular religiosity and homespun values—much of which occurs not only in the plot but also in the production numbers—the film hints at a massification of culture at the Radio Ranch as well and hints at a reconciliation: as much the film argues for Autry's authenticity as a singer, he is the owner of Radio Ranch and its airwaves carry his voice to millions of listeners and he is acknowledged as an advertising spokesman. The camera showcases his talents in ways that would never be possible in a live performance. In a fascinating way this very ambivalence is embodied by the singing cowboy: he is represented as an authentic crooner, singing ballads that are personal and heartfelt, wearing rural sincerity as a badge. But his personal reach is compromised by Fordism itself: he is singing not to me but to millions, and these recordings will become manufactured, popular artifacts in future movies, records and spinoffs. He is able to be authentic—a kind of original artist—by virtue of mass art. There is only one Gene Autry, but he is reproduced by mass art for the delight of

many, even as the camera shots persuade us that he is in our living rooms. This ambivalence of the singing cowboy begins to hint at the reasons why he inhabits both the world of modernity and rural America in the film: he must reconcile these two worlds because he embodies both the artistic and the commercial.

The line between folk or even popular art and mass art is very thin, but *The Phantom Empire* wears mass art on its sleeve. As I have suggested, much of the plot of the series begs a survival motif around the triumph of the radio broadcast itself as well as its star performer, Gene Autry. The opening sequence is really about mass art and how it works its magic on an audience. Although he achieved success in *Tumbling Tumbleweed* as a singing cowboy, Gene Autry came to *The Phantom Empire* not as a movie star, but as a radio personality, having broadcast on WLS AM radio from Chicago in the *National Barn Dance* and continued his success in radio throughout the *Phantom* series. To some extent, *The Phantom Empire* is not only about Autry the singing cowboy, but also Autry the radio personality, who, of course, plays himself in the film. The first sequence is very much a recollection of Autry exploiting off-screen space as a celebrity burlesquing a hold-up and making off with the instruments just in time for the radio show.

But there is more. The songs such as "Uncle Noah's Ark" function as a kind of commentary on the narrative, with the singing cowboy as its bard or prophet who offers a social critique of modernity. Let us recall that the first production number sets us up with an intimate version of Autry and his relationship with the audience. The lyrics of "Uncle Noah's Ark" comically recall the folk history of the world as saved by Noah during the flood, according the Book of Genesis: "A long time ago/As all of you folks should know/Uncle Noah build himself an ark/Uncle Noah: that's a boat, folks/. For 40 days and nights/The rain was quite a fright/The animals nearly tore the ark apart/ The ducks went

quack. . .” I might speculate that in some sense this gathering of popular religiosity about the salvation of the world from the Great Flood, comments on the high art, scientific city of Murania and its inhabitants (from the lost tribe of Mu with their own “Garden of Life”), who also faced extinction but secured a place underground in the last glacial period. “Uncle Noah’s Ark” underlines human history, brought together by radio, mass art and the singing cowboy. The song is reprised at the end, as if to hint at a victory for the familiar story of civilization that has now triumphed over the barren Queen and the scientific city. Furthermore, Murania’s troubled past has also been sterile, without family, even as it exists as a race of adults without children or couples to reproduce them. Murania’s populous has no history, as if they the citizens themselves have been manufactured. Autry’s second number in the series, “Silver Haired Daddy of Mine,” (a reprise from *Tumbling Tumbleweeds*) recollects a familial relationship that longs for healing and discloses a scenario that could not be more different than what we will see in Murania: “If God would but grant me the power/Just to turn back the pages of time/ I’d give all I own, if I could atone to that silver haired Daddy of mine.”

Autry’s songs reinforce folk tradition, mass art and its vehicle, radio, by endorsing humanist values associated with the popular. The signifiers for these values are the symbols and sounds embedded in folk culture, which embrace home, religion and common fellowship. These promotions and acknowledgement of grief and mortality run completely antithetical to Queen Tika’s empire of the elite. As I have suggested, the Queen is not only fearful of Autry, but also mass culture, entertainment and the populous that enjoys its pleasures. When Tika looks into her video screen in Chapter Two, for instance, she deplores what see sees as frivolous; it is Autry singing “Oscar and Pete,” a song that expresses community values that rural communities would hold

dear. “Now when I want my britches pressed and when I want to look my best I call on Oscar . . . And when my saddle needs some soap, I know the guy that’s got the dope, I call on Pete.” The song builds a fraternal relationship with the folk culture that surrounds it, thrives on it and admires it; the song celebrates a camaraderie long held dear in rural communities. Some of these songs became hits for Autry, even as they found an opposition to high, elitist culture.

But while *The Phantom Empire* champions mass art and its underlying folk and popular values, it also reconciles the anxieties perceived with modernity. Consider, for instance, the way the plot resolves. After Argo and the rebellion triggers the destruction of the modernist city, the Queen suddenly performs a humanist act of heroics by letting Gene and his friends go; she prefers to die with all of Murania. But while Autry might be out of the hands of the Queen and Murania’s death ray, that still does not save Gene from the accusation of killing Frankie and Betsey’s father until Frankie uses a gadget from the debris of Murania in his secret lab to play back a video recording of Professor Beetson’s confession to the crime. One gets the sense that Murania must die so that the Radio Ranch might live. Murania’s modernist scientific fruits, now integrated into rural America, have not only solved the crime, but also rescued Gene. In an eerie projection of future communication, it was the video machine and not the radio that rescued the star. A modernist invention in the Metropolis of elite engineers comes into the possession of a boy who delivers truth electronically when the criminal is recorded. Mass art comes to the service of the common good, even as two worlds are reconciled. The authentic testimony of a witness becomes possible through electronic media. The singing cowboy reconciles two worlds. Maybe he will help to reconcile our own.

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The Absurdity and Irony of the Hillbilly Shakespeare

By Carl Eddy

> They clepe us drunkards and with swinish phrase
> Soil our addition, and indeed it takes
> From our achievements, though performed at height,
> The pith and marrow of our attribute.
>
> *Hamlet* (1.4.18-22)

The Hillbilly Shakespeare

A web search on the words "Hillbilly Shakespeare" yields a robust majority of results relating to Hank Williams; seventy-one of the top one hundred results, and fifty-eight of the top one hundred images. It is a safe bet to say that Hank Williams and the Hillbilly Shakespeare label are closely associated. A handful of these findings use the moniker in the title of an article or the review of a book, movie, or recording collection, without elaborating on its source or meaning. In some cases, writers mention the nickname in passing, on their way to making another point about Hank, using transitional phrases such as, "The Hillbilly Shakespeare will be brought to life…," "Referred to by some as…," "…a music legend dubbed…," "…often called the…," etc. It is a catchy appropriation of the William Shakespeare name and legacy, but in most instances it is used casually. In the field of journalism and scholarship about Hank Williams, it is a staple of the lexicon. But, where and when did it start, and why is it so commonplace today, roughly seventy years after Hank's time? It would be helpful to

have an etymology of the expression, "The Hillbilly Shakespeare," and some validation of its use.

The first time the words "hillbilly" and "Shakespeare" were documented in association with Hank Williams was on April 4, 1948. Allen Rankin, a columnist for the *Montgomery Advertiser*, often wrote about Hank and the progress of his career in his "Rankin File" column. In his April 4th column, Rankin describes a scene at Montgomery's WSFA radio studio where Hank was performing three times a day and developing a reputation as a songwriter:

> This is why the boys around the studio – even avowed haters of hillbilly – get quiet and reverent when Hank looks like he might be even beginning to think of having another song idea.
>
> "Shhh," they say, "That's Shakespeare. It used to be hillbilly. Now it's Shakespeare!"

At that time, Hank was basking in the success of his first major hit, "Move It on Over," which was released in June of the previous year, 1947, and peaked at number four on *Billboard* magazine's "Most Played Juke Box Folk Records" chart. By the time of Rankin's quote, Hank had also written and released "When God Comes and Gathers His Jewels," "I Saw the Light," "Mansion on the Hill," and fourteen other original songs. Six of his songs had been recorded by Molly O'Day. In terms of songwriting, this was a good track record, but it was still a year before his major break-out with "Lovesick Blues," which, although it was a cover song, certainly brought more prominence to Hank, likely including the fact that he wrote the majority of the songs he recorded. To place this point in time in qualitative terms of Hank's songwriting chronology, Rankin's mention of Shakespeare in 1948 occurred

over a year before Hank released "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" and "Why Don't You Love Me," two and a half years before "Cold, Cold Heart," three years before "Hey Good Lookin'" and "I Can't Help It," and, over four years before "You Win Again," "Jambalaya," and "Your Cheatin' Heart."

In Rankin's description of this scene, with the "boys around the studio," one gets the feeling of a group of bandmates and buddies, who carefreely used the name of the great playwright and poet as a superlative to honor Hank's songwriting accomplishments, much like a group of ball-playing pals of that period might have called a good hitter "The Bambino" after the great Babe Ruth. However, there's ambiguity in Rankin's words. *That's* Shakespeare. *It* used to be hillbilly. Now *it's* Shakespeare. Are the boys referring to Hank as a hillbilly? Or, was Hank nicknamed "Hillbilly?" In fact, in the same column, Rankin reverts back to "hillbilly Hank." Or, is it a reference to the hillbilly category still used to identify country performers, their recordings, and their buyers at this time? Neither Rankin nor the boys say definitively that "Hank Williams is The Hillbilly Shakespeare." At best, this scene and the reference to Shakespeare are prototypical.

There were other labels applied to Hank during his career: the Irving Berlin of the Straw Set, the Sinatra of the hillbilly set, the spur-jangling Sinatra of the Western Ballad, the Lovesick Blues Boy, Mr. Lovesick Blues, the King of Hillbillies, and The King of the Blues. Allen Rankin himself, in another Montgomery Advertiser column, published the day of Hank's funeral, refers to "Hank the Hillbilly Hammerstein" and elaborates on his "… remarkable Hammersteinian ear, for what was clean and clever in our rural language…"

With all this said, I did not find any other use of a Shakespeare–related nickname in relation to Hank Williams during Hank's lifetime or for roughly ten years after his death: not in a print ad

for record releases, not on a personal appearance poster, not in a magazine feature, not in the statements made over the years by those who were close to him, and not in the record of statements attributed to Hank himself – with two exceptions.

Hank mentioned Shakespeare in just two instances. On one occasion, when he was asked to provide feedback on a fellow writer's lyrics, Hank said, "You write just like Shakespeare. If you don't watch out, you'll be buried in the same grave with him." If Hank elaborated on what he meant by this, it was not captured for the record. We can assume that he felt his fellow writer's lyrics were too uptown or highfalutin' for the country music audience, because, in other instances, Hank attributed his music's popularity to sincerity aimed at "the dreams and prayers and hopes of the working people," "I call them the 'best people,'" he said, "because they are the ones that the world is made up most of." "It's just that there are more people who are like us than there are the educated, cultured kind."

Apparently, Hank believed William Shakespeare wrote for the more *educated* and *cultured* people, rather than Hank's working class audience. This is evidenced by the second statement attributed to Hank about Shakespeare. From Allen Rankin's column, published the day of Hank's funeral, "Flowery, stilted phrases offended you. The worst thing you could think to say about a fancy lyricist was, 'He's no good atall [sic]. He writes just like Shakespeare.'"

The major writings about Hank Williams do not reveal whether he was exposed to Shakespeare's works in school. However, it is noted that he had little interest in school, was focused on a singing career by the age of fourteen, was playing gigs with his band, skipped or slept through many classes, and quit high school at the age of sixteen. Likely, if Hank had any impression of Shakespeare's work, it was as part of the schoolwork he had

no interest in, so his cognizance of Shakespeare was superficial at best, and stereotyped at worst. On its surface, the connection between Hank Williams and William Shakespeare is absurd.

The hillbilly Shakespeare signifier vanished from use until 1963, when it was described in a feature about Frank B. Walker and the development of country music in *Billboard's* special issue, "The World of Country Music," dated November 2nd. With an influential career behind him as a talent finder for Columbia Records and President of RCA Records, Walker had launched MGM Records in 1945 and signed Hank Williams to a MGM recording contract in 1947. Walker cited Hank Williams as the most important contributor in the history of country music.

> He was a poet, a hillbilly Shakespeare, Walker notes, adding that Williams first conceived of his songs as poems. He would first write the verses and then pick up his guitar and softly strum a melodic accompaniment. And in this way he would build a melody around the lines.
>
> You could tell stories to Hank, discuss things with him… and out of the conversation would come something…a spark of conversation could set him working on a poem which would later become a song…He always had paper and pencil near.

Here, more than Rankin or the boys around the studio in 1948, Walker connects the Shakespeare signifier directly to Hank, and explains his rationale for doing so: Hank was the most important contributor to country music's development, and he was a poet.

Walker's perception of Hank Williams as a poet was rooted in his earlier role of talent scout for Columbia Records, in the

course of which he recruited, recorded, and marketed rural talent for the emerging hillbilly and race music markets of the 1920s and 1930s. He described his reasoning to Mike Seeger in a 1962 interview.

> You see, what is not generally understood, Mike, is that a song writer in the South or in the hills is different than a songwriter in the North or in the cities.
>
> Primarily, he's a poet. Up here, a man may be a musician. Down there they write the words first. Up here, you have collaborators, one is a lyric writer and the other is a musician. But down there, essentially speaking, it is all done by one person. So essentially in his heart he is a poet. He writes something. He writes and it rhymes. Let's call him a rhymester, not a poet.
>
> Like Hank Williams. That's the way he wrote all of his things. He would write words as they happened to come to him, to fit a certain situation like *Cold, Cold Heart*. Maybe you would not like a word or two, but he didn't know no other one to fit in its place. So he'd pick up his guitar, worked around it until that word that he didn't like or didn't properly fit (perhaps in the rhyme) – nevertheless, made sense when music was put to it. He made it fit.

Walker did not live to elaborate on his notion of Hank as a hillbilly Shakespeare. Although he died on October 15, 1963, less than three weeks before the *Billboard* feature, his views seem to have established a new lens through which to interpret Hank's life and body of work. One year later, *Billboard's* Paul Ackerman refers

to Walker's use of "hillbilly Shakespeare." Another year later, in June 1965, *Time* magazine's review of the movie *Your Cheatin' Heart* used the title "Hillbilly Shakespeare," (the first use of a capital "H") and the review refers to "the 'hillbilly Shakespeare'" (the first use of "the" instead of "a"). A slip of the pen, maybe. Small points, yes, but they suggest a growing acceptance of the moniker and a subtle shift toward its application to one individual: Hank Williams.

Billboard reprinted the Walker articles and reverberated Walker's "hillbilly Shakespeare" notions for over a dozen years. In 1966, Ackerman elaborated on "The Poetry and Imagery of Country Songs," including the Walker quotes. Also in 1966, Robert Shelton followed *Time's* example, tagging Hank as the "hillbilly Shakespeare," while employing Elizabethan descriptors including poets, bards, tragedy, and falling action. In the first major biography of Hank Williams, *Sing a Sad Song*, published in 1970, Roger M. Williams writes in his preface, "Williams has been hailed as a folk poet, a 'hillbilly Shakespeare,' and his best work, with its poignant simplicity and unblushing emotion, is indeed poetic." In a 1983 *TV Guide* magazine feature (presumably very widely distributed), timed to coincide with the broadcast of the television movie, *Living Proof: The Hank Williams Jr. Story*, playwright Larry L. King's feature on Hank Sr. uses the moniker three times, including in the title, "The Hillbilly Shakespeare left'em sobbin' in their beer" [sic].

The steady reverberation of the Fred Walker and Paul Ackerman signifiers and concepts in *Billboard*, combined with the dissemination of the words through nationally-distributed, household magazines, and with its frequent inclusion in the growing scholarship about country music and literature about Hank Williams – altogether, this apparently led to an awareness, an acceptance, and the buy-in to the impression that Hank Williams is

the one and only Hillbilly Shakespeare. But, why has this sobriquet endured for seventy years? Why not, the "King of the Hillbillies," or, the "spur-jangling Sinatra of the Western Ballad?" Before this begins to sound like a country music version of *Miracle on 34th Street* (or, if you will, a "Miracle on 16th Avenue" – forgive me), let us consider a few comparisons.

Absurdities

As I suggested earlier, the connection between Hank Williams and William Shakespeare appears absurd. Beyond the obvious differences in time, geography, and culture, there are numerous disparities.

Hank's only known words about Shakespeare were in the form of criticism of song lyrics that were too fancy, too educated, or too cultured for his taste. His poverty-stricken childhood, broken family, alcoholism, and the call of music must have limited his ability to imagine opportunities through education and probably squelched any motivation to continue schooling beyond the legal requirement. He quit school at sixteen. Writers often label him as illiterate or semi-literate. It is unlikely that the Shakespeare signifier used by the boys around the WSFA studio in 1948 was something Hank nurtured for himself and less likely that the themes of his songwriting were rooted in an awareness of Shakespeare's work. It is written that Hank once told his mother what songs are made of; he said, "Love. It's love that makes the best songs." Yet, as an example of an opportunity he might have slept through, one that might have served him well, nothing to-date indicates that Hank had even a superficial awareness of, say, Shakespeare's great love story, *Romeo and Juliet*.

In contrast, William Shakespeare's education likely included rigorous instruction in the articles of the Christian faith, and the mastery of Latin, including the active use of Latin in the study and

performance of ancient plays by Ovid, Terence, and Plutus. In fact, Shakespeare actively retained his grammar school learnings and played them forward, as evidenced by the later appearance of those ancient words, plots, and themes in his own plays and poems. It is unlikely that Hank would have approached Shakespeare's level of literacy even if he had perfect attendance every year through high school and stayed awake in every class.

In terms of sheer volume, Shakespeare produced 884,647 words and 118,406 lines. Hank produced an estimated 17,940 words and 2,080 lines. Even if Hank's ten-year productive period, roughly 1942-1952, was doubled to approximately the length of Shakespeare's active period of 1589-1613, the deficit in production would still be overwhelming. These are crude comparisons for sure, and they offer neither a qualitative analysis of their bodies of work, nor do they consider the formats and merits of their respective literary genres. Neither does it consider the amount of collaboration that both Hank and Will participated in, but the chasm in raw production data contributes to the absurdity of the association of these two individuals.

From a qualitative perspective, William Shakespeare's body of work reflects an extraordinary knowledge and ability to incorporate, dramatize, and poeticize language, history, literature, politics, foreign affairs, and the human condition. On the other hand, it has been questioned whether Hank Williams's song lyrics even stand up as poetry. Lee Smith states, "A set of rhymes is not a poem. Poetry depends upon metaphor." In evaluating "Your Cheatin' Heart," she refers to the lyrics as, "…raw emotional fact, given to us in sing-song doggerel verse."

In addition to William Shakespeare's talent as a playwright, performer, and poet, he demonstrated the business skill and discipline to lead and manage his theater troupe, the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Eventually, his group directed the construction of, and

managed their own theater, the Globe. He made wise investments, accumulated a modest fortune, and managed it wisely. Accepting for the moment that Hank Williams was a poet, and one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, the flip side is that his management of the personal and business dimensions of his life and career pales next to that of Shakespeare. Hank was plagued with alcoholism, which contributed to his personal volatility and unreliability. His lack of business acumen led to woeful money management and investment losses. His bitterness and feelings of inferiority stemming from his hardscrabble background, sometimes exceeded his common man pride and spewed forth as arrogance, anger, and boorish behavior. Compared to William Shakespeare, and to most business professionals of Hank's own time, Hank was a very loose cannon.

Similarities

In light of these great discrepancies, why does Hank Williams as the Hillbilly Shakespeare still resonate? Does it merely signify higher credibility or pizazz than "the Hillbilly Hammerstein?" Or is there something more to it? Don Cusic alludes to the poetic strength of Hank's lyrics and, like Shakespeare, his ability to articulate the emotions of every man and woman. Allen Rankin likened Hank to "…a bard of the type that once chronicled heart-feelings and events of the Middle Ages." Fred Walker described Hank's songwriting process and its similarity to that of the balladeers of the British Isles, transmitting new, personally relevant lyrics through the use of familiar, repeatable melodies. Nonetheless, seriously, is it comparable to Shakespeare? There are some intriguing similarities.

Few records specific to William Shakespeare's childhood have survived, but Stephen Greenblatt creates a compelling case for Shakespeare's developmental experiences by detailing what

is known of the time, the culture, and the events surrounding young Will. For example, in addition to his playacting in school, he may very well have seen performances by traveling playing companies. Their arrival in his provincial town of Stratford-upon-Avon would have been announced by a festive parade including the fanfare of trumpets and drums. (This in itself is reminiscent of the automobiles used in Hank's time, with roof-mounted loudspeakers, driven through towns to advertise upcoming performances.) The plays of young Will's time were mostly "morality plays," secular sermons demonstrating the consequences of sins and weaknesses, embodied in characters with names like Ignorance, Lechery, All-for-Money, Idleness, or simply, The Vice. It takes little stretch of the imagination to see the similarity to Hank's Luke the Drifter recordings. Through characters like the bad girl down the street, the shameful gambler, the outcast who was once a true woman, and the walking dead with broken hearts, Luke would caution his listeners against criticism, condemnation, gossip, greed, and to be careful of stones that you throw. Some of these were original songs and some were songs Hank picked up along the way, but in either case, they speak to a core of humanity within Hank that permeates his body of work, as young Will's assimilation of the morality plays resonated deeply and played forward into the masterworks he would go on to create as an adult.

In addition to transmitting folk wisdom and reaching the great mass of ordinary people, the morality plays of Will's time also featured a current of subversive humor. The Vice character was jesting, prattling, a mischief-maker, prancing about, "scorning the hicks, insulting the solemn agents of order and piety." Will learned that the boundary between comedy and tragedy is porous. "His sense of tragedy had room for clowning and laughter" and it is imaginable that he might have taken great pleasure in Hank's performances of sad tales packaged in upbeat

tempos and humorous language, with lines like: "My hair's still curly and my eyes are still blue, why don't you love me like you used to do;" "I ain't had a kiss since I fell out of my crib, it looks to me like I've been cheated out of my rib;" "You got me chasin' rabbits, spittin' out teeth, and howling at the moon;" and, "Kaw-Liga just stands there as lonely as can be, and wishes he was still an old pine tree."

Stephen Greenblatt repeatedly emphasizes how Will absorbed everything he experienced in terms of people, professions, institutions, and personal relationships, and how he incorporated it all into his body of work. In particular, "He was the supreme poet of courtship…" expressing love, courting, pleading, and longing "more profoundly than almost anyone in the world." The same can be said about Hank Williams. Remember his statement that "It's love that makes the best songs." His songs expressing the giddy joys and heartbreaking depths of love dominate his repertoire. According to Dorothy Horstman, Hank "remains to this day the most sympathetic and successful figure in the musical expression of unrequited love."

Consider the similarity of these lines of Shakespeare's, describing a general pattern to courtship and marriage, and compare them to the subsequent example from Hank's body of work:

Men are April when they woo, December when they wed.

Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives.

As You Like It (4.1.140-141)

We met in the springtime when blossoms unfold,
The pastures were green and the meadows were gold.
Our love was in flower as summer grew on,
Her love, like the leaves, now has withered and gone.

The roses have faded, there's frost at my door,
The birds in the morning don't sing anymore.
The grass in the valley is starting to die,
And out in the darkness, the whippoorwills cry.

"Alone and Forsaken"

In a similar vein, Shakespeare's character, Beatrice, describes a template of love's progression, that of "wooing, wedding, repenting."

For hear me, Hero, wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinquepace. The first suite is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly modest as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance, and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace faster and faster till he sink into his grave.

Much Ado about Nothing (2.1.60-65)

This is Hank's wheelhouse. Beatrice's template could be played out in a Hank Williams concept collection of songs. Consider these key passages from songs Hank performed or wrote for others:

Wooing -

When you and your baby have a falling out,
Call me up sweet mama, and we'll go steppin' out.

"Honky Tonkin'"

Say, hey good lookin', whatcha got cookin',
How's about cookin' something up with me?

"Hey Good Lookin'"

I never thought in this old world a fool could fall so hard,
But, honey baby, when I fell, the whole world must have jarred.

"Howlin' At the Moon"

Well, me and my baby are going steady,
We ain't married but we're getting ready.

"Goin' Steady",

I run around in circles and turn in fire alarms,
I'm nutty as a fruitcake when you're not in my arms.

"Baby We're Really in Love"

Wedding -

My folks think I've gone crazy, and I don't feel too sure,
And yet there's nothing wrong with me that wedding bells won't cure.

"Baby, We're Really in Love"

All the happiness I ever known, came the day you said you'd be my own, And it matters not what we go through, darling, I could never be ashamed of you.

"I Could Never Be Ashamed Of You"

We'll get the ring and be on our way to see the preacher man,
And when you say I do sweetheart, I'll slip the ring on your loving hand.

"Goin' Steady"

Repenting -

This ain't right, and that is wrong, you just keep naggin', all the day long.
It's gotta stop, I don't mean please, you're gonna change or I'm a'gonna leave.

"You're Gonna Change (Or I'm Gonna Leave)"

If I get my head beat black and blue, now that's my wife and my stove wood too, Why don't you mind your own business, mind your own business.

"Mind Your Own Business"

There was a time when I believed that you belonged to me,
But now I know your heart is shackled to a memory.

"Cold, Cold Heart"

She promised to honor, to love and obey,
Each vow was a plaything that she threw away.

"Alone and Forsaken"

The silence of a falling star lights up a purple sky,
And as I wonder where you are, I'm so lonesome I could cry.

"I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry"

Yes, I received your note today, saying you'd come back and stay, Don't come back now, it is too late, my love for you has turned to hate.

"My Love for You Has Turned To Hate"

As much as Woody Guthrie's *Dust Bowl Ballads*, Willie Nelson's *Phases and Stages* and *Red Headed Stranger*, Frank Sinatra's *In The Wee Small Hours* and *September Of My Years*, a Hank Williams collection titled after William Shakespeare's *Wooing, Wedding, and Repenting* model would comprise a magnificent concept album.

The theme of gold and greed is another vein that runs through the works of Hank Williams and William Shakespeare. In *Timon of Athens*, Timon is an Athenian lord who is surrounded by friends who are drawn to him because of his wealth and extravagant generosity. Timon is warned by the misanthropic philosopher, Apemantus, that his friends are the fair weather kind, while Timon's loyal servant Flavius warns that Timon is actually sinking into debt. Eventually, Timon discovers gold in the woods and re-establishes his wealth, but his trust in humankind has already been destroyed and has descended into permanent hatred.

The plot of *Timon of Athens* has echoes of Hank's achievement of wealth and the class bitterness that he carried with him to the end. In describing how he came to write "Men with Broken Hearts," he said, "Don't know why I happen to of wrote that thing…except somebody that fell, he's the same man as before he fell, ain't he? Got the same blood in his veins. How can he be such a nice guy when he's got it and such a bad guy when he ain't got nothin'? Can you tell me?" Once, after achieving success and prominence, he sensed he was receiving special treatment from a music shop in Montgomery. "You know I tried to buy a guitar on credit there once when I was comin' up, and they wouldn't have nothing to do with me. Now they want to give me one." In another instance, he refused a dinner invitation from a Montgomery banker, because, "when I was starving in this town, the son of a bitch wouldn't buy me a hamburger. Now there's nothing too good for me. What's the matter, ain't I the same guy?"

His Apemantus was in the character of the fraudulent addiction therapist, Toby Marshall. In Marshall's analysis of Hank's failing condition in 1952, Marshall later wrote, "…he had a host of fair weather friends, most of whom were parasites who fawned upon him, played up to him, kept him supplied with liquor and women, and usually wound up by getting to him for a chunk of money."

For another instance of the gold theme, this time from *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo engages an apothecary to obtain poison so that he may join Juliet in her apparent death. Initially, the apothecary is averse to breaking the law against selling such poison, but he is also poor and therefore accepts Romeo's offer of forty ducats. In completing the transaction, Romeo says –

> There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls,
> Doing more murder in this loathsome world,
> Than these poor compounds that thou mayst not sell.
> I sell thee poison. Thou hast sold me none.
>
> *Romeo and Juliet* (5.1.82-85)

Shakespeare speaks to the consequences of greed in his epic poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*, and Hank addresses the same in his songs "House of Gold" and "Wealth Won't Save Your Soul."

> Those that much covet are with gain so fond
> For what they have not, that which they possess,
> They scatter and unloose it from their bond;
> And so by hoping more they have but less,
> Or, gaining more, the profit of excess
> Is but to surfeit, and such griefs sustain
> That they prove bankrupt in this poor-rich gain.
>
> *The Rape of Lucrece* (134-140)

People steal, they cheat and lie,
For wealth and what it will buy,
But don't they know on the Judgement Day,
That gold and silver will melt away.

"House of Gold"

As we journey along life's wicked road,
So selfish are we for silver and gold,
You can treasure your wealth, your silver and gold,
But, my friends, it won't save your poor wicked soul.

"Wealth Won't Save Your Soul"

Perhaps the negativity in the themes of gold and wealth stem from the financial issues the Shakespeare and Williams families experienced. Will's father, John, rose through successive positions of municipal responsibility in Stratford, up to bailiff, similar to a mayor, and would have been trusted and respected in the community. Then, when Will was about thirteen years old, John's fortunes abruptly changed, perhaps as a result of a government crackdown on illegal dealing in the wool trade. Whatever the cause, he dropped out of public life, ceased to attend town council meetings, and discontinued mandatory church attendance, likely to avoid facing debt processes. As his resources dwindled, he sold off land interests and consumed his wife's, resources and properties as well. Will, who observed and remembered every nuance of his life's experience, would have keenly felt the humiliation of his father's fall from grace. It may have prevented Will from attending university.

Hank's father, Lon Williams, was a World War I veteran who had suffered a head injury in a fight over a French woman. When he returned to Alabama, he began working for the logging companies as he was fond of saying, "from can to cain't." Lon

began to experience facial paralysis, stemming from his wartime injury, and became unable to hold down a job. He left the family home in 1930, when Hank was six, and was admitted for over eight years to the Veterans Administration hospital system. Lon's absence from the Williams home put Hank's mother, Lillie, in full charge of their situation in order to survive, a role she assumed assertively. In addition to working a variety of jobs to sustain her impoverished family, Lillie put young Hank to work selling peanuts and shining shoes. One of Hank's responses to Lon's absence was to write a poem, "I Wish I Had a Dad." Like Will, Hank did not forget his hardscrabble childhood, however, he was not as able to overcome his family's poor standing and channel his lessons learned constructively. Hank harbored a distrust of wealth and social class and was defensive about it for the rest of his life. Beginning in his teens, these feelings would be combined with shame over his excessive drinking.

There are further lines of investigation and comparative analysis, too numerous to consider in depth in this format. For those looking to pursue additional trains of thought, the following are some potential points of interest.

The true authorship of each individual's body of work has been contested in some circles. In Shakespeare's case, it has been suggested that perhaps Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon, or the Earl of Oxford actually wrote the great plays. The arguments against Shakespeare being the true author of his extraordinary body of work are founded on the incompatibility between the knowledge demonstrated in his works and his lack of a university education. In Hank's case, the extent of Fred Rose's role as his publisher, A&R man, and songwriting mentor, has long been a subject of debate. Rose, a strong songwriter himself, wrote some songs for Hank, shared credit with Hank on others, and is generally acknowledged to have polished other songs for which

he took no credit. In the opinion of one Nashville insider, "Hank was a grammar school drop-out, who was an alcoholic before he was old enough to join the Boys Scouts, which he never did... Think of the lyrics to some of the songs…Have you ever heard a redneck hillbilly from South Alabama use language like that?" In addition to the thought that Fred Rose was responsible for Hank's best songs, questions have been raised over how many of Hank's songs were purchased from other writers, in particular, "Cold, Cold Heart," and, "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry." Known also to borrow melodies from other artists' recordings, he was even sued for plagiarism over the melody he used for "Cold, Cold, Heart."

Greenblatt writes of the charmed period when Shakespeare and other playwrights converged upon the London scene. He mentions other time periods when the stars came into alignment in other fields: painters upon Florence, jazz artists upon New Orleans, and blues performers upon Chicago. It is mildly surprising, if not a glaring omission, that he did not include Nashville and the evolution of country music as another example. It would be fascinating to compare the social, economic, and political forces at work in the theater world of 16th century London, and those affecting the post-World War II emergence of the country music industry in Nashville.

Perhaps the most timely and relevant study and analysis of these two bodies of work would be directed toward issues of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and diversity, as well as tolerance, acceptance, and appreciation: the anti-Semitism and hatred of "alien-strangers" during Shakespeare's period; the racism and pursuit of civil rights in Hank's time; and, the current unrest over racism, intolerance, white supremacy, and immigration. In Will's time, there was great concern about subversive Catholics, Jews (who had been banished from England for centuries), and the threat of foreign invasion. As a youth, Shakespeare may have

been discreetly Catholic when fealty to the Protestant Church of England was mandatory. In Hank's case, it is well-known that he was tutored by a black street musician as an adolescent and had a bluesy vibe to many of his songs, but there is also evidence that he used the racial epithets common to his time and place. It can be a very slippery slope when attempting to compare values and attitudes from one time and place to another. Analyzing Will's and Hank's cultural norms, relating them to their work, and relating it all to today's issues would be a challenging yet potentially fascinating study. Anyone attempting such a study should first consider the case of Abraham Lincoln. The Great Emancipator himself has come in for criticism of his beliefs, words, and actions regarding racism, emancipation, and equality. Similar to Lincoln's imperfection, perhaps Will and Hank were also men of their eras, and yet somewhat more inclusive than the cultural norms of their respective times and places. The following passages might serve as a starting point. Digest their relevance in today's world while you consider in your mind's eye the images of racial conflict, sexual and other forms of violence and harassment, of DACA Dreamers facing expulsion, and the body of three year-old refugee Aylan Kurdi washed up on the Mediterranean shore –

> Imagine that you see the wretched strangers,
> Their babies at their backs, with their poor luggage
> Plodding to th' ports and coasts for transportation,
> And that you sit as kings in your desires,
> Authority quite silenced by your brawl
> And you in ruff of your opinions clothed:
> What had you got? I'll tell you. You had taught
> How insolence and strong hand should prevail,
> How order should be quelled – and by this pattern
> Not one of you should live an aged man,
> For other ruffians as their fancies wrought

> With selfsame hand, self reasons, self right
> Would shark on you, and men like ravenous fishes
> Would feed on one another.
>
> *Sir Thomas Moore* (83-96)

> You have no right to judge, to criticize and condemn,
> Just think, but for the grace of God, it would be you instead of him.
>
> Oh so humble you should be when they come passing by,
> For it's written that the greatest men never get too big to cry.
>
> You've never walked in that man's shoes, or saw things through his eyes, Or stood and watched with helpless hands while the heart inside you dies.
>
> So help your brother along the road, no matter where you start, For the God that made you, made them too, these men with broken hearts.
>
> "Men with Broken Hearts"

Further potential avenues of comparative study might include the "falling action" periods of both Hank's and Will's careers and lives, considering how Hank's back surgery, divorce from his wife, and/or firing from the Grand Ole Opry compare to the period of Shakespeare's retirement and life after the Globe Theater burned. How did they endure the economic and personal consequences of career interruptions? For Shakespeare, it was the bubonic plague and the closure of London's theaters in 1594; for Hank, it was the ban on recording by the American Federation of Musicians in 1948.

Ironies

The first irony is that Will and Hank had more in common than many people suspect. Yes, Hank Williams was born and raised in rural poverty, was poorly educated, yet he rose to achieve fame as a songwriter and performer. And yet, Will's story contains some similarities. Having been born and raised in small Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare also had deep roots in the country. All of his close relatives were farmers; he spent a great deal of time in the fields, the woods, and he experienced small-town seasonal festivals and folk customs. Importantly, he did not repudiate the provincial people and experiences of his youth when he moved to London, became successful, and operated in higher classes. He took his experiences and characters with him and brought them to dramatic life in his work.

In the course of achieving success on the London stage, Shakespeare needed to demonstrate his exceptional talents and overcome the likely perceptions that he was a "country bumpkin" and an "upstart crow" who did not attend university at Cambridge or Oxford, which conferred a significant amount of personal and professional credibility on those who did. Will's career path was similar to that of many country music performers trying to hit the big time. Thomas Bradac, founder of Shakespeare Orange County and a theater professor at Chapman University describes, "It's always ironic to me when people start talking about Shakespeare as being so highfalutin'…the plays themselves were the dime novels of their day. That's why the royalty didn't go to them, and why they got kicked out of London, and moved to the South Bank, next to the whorehouses."

The ultimate irony is knowing that Hank Williams himself held the view that Shakespeare appealed only to higher-cultured, higher-educated people. Yet Hank's work is recognized for some of the same reasons as Shakespeare's: it's timeless, it's universal,

and it connects with people from all walks of life. Writer Neil LaBute, in praising the *The Wizard of Oz* film (1939), describes how broadly popular and long-lasting works achieve that connection, "one of the great gifts to an audience which is not spelling everything out, allowing [allows] the audience to do the rest of the work, to take these elements home with them and decide for themselves what they've actually got from it and allow subjectivity to reign." Maybe Hank even had an inkling of the broader appeal of his music when he said, "There ain't nothing at all queer about them Europeans liking our kind of singing. It's liable to teach them more about what everyday Americans are like than anything else." What would Will and Hank have thought of today's literary culture, multiple intelligences, multiple literacies, multiple text formats, and an era in which Hank Williams is awarded a Pulitzer Prize, and Hank Williams disciple Bob Dylan wins the Nobel Prize for Literature?

In today's milieu, where the boundaries between highbrow/lowbrow, songs/poetry, audio/video, virtual/reality, and sense/nonsense are blurred, and the relevance of everything is much more subjective. The responsibility for determining meaning belongs more to the reader, the viewer, the listener, the sensor, the consumer. In this environment, it does not matter as much what Fred Walker, Paul Ackerman, the boys around the studio, or any of us say. No. Meaning is more in the eye of the beholder. As Greenblatt describes, "…the difference between the professional actor and the amateur actor is not finally, the crucial consideration. They both rely on the imagination of the spectators."

In closing, I mimic the opening words of Robert Sawyer's article, *Country Matters: Shakespeare and Music in the American South*. Sawyer quizzed, "Which of the word groups does not fit in the following list: battered pick-up trucks, blue tick hounds, Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer, and the Bard of Avon." The anomaly is

meant to be obvious (although Sawyer goes on to describe how the lines are more blurred than we might expect). Below, I offer what I feel is a more subtle set of choices, and, although the answer might be obvious due our familiarity with the canons of Williams Shakespeare and Hank Williams, the incongruence of their words is much less so.

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,

How can I then return in happy plight
That am debarred the benefit of rest?
When day's oppression is not eased by night,
But day by night and night by day oppressed?

For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see.

Your cheatin' heart, will make you weep,
You'll cry and cry, and try to sleep.
But sleep won't come the whole night through,
Your cheatin' heart will tell on you.

In conclusion, if the word "hillbilly" signifies a uniquely American variant of those iconic children of Charles Dickens, Ignorance and Want, then it is certainly absurd that it has come to be associated with the name "Shakespeare," which signifies to many the epitome of creativity, high class, and advanced literary

expression. However, if the combination of these two signifiers represents Hank Williams, a semi-literate country singer who dominates the history of the genre to this day, and has achieved a similar universal, multi-class reach as William Shakespeare, then it is not only ironic, it is entirely appropriate for the reasons I have described.

> Nothing in his life became
> Him like the leaving it. He died
> As one that had been studied in his death
> To throw away the dearest thing he owed
> As 'twere a careless trifle.
>
> *Macbeth* (1.4.8-9)

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More Than Just "Tramp On The Street": The Musical Legacy of Grady, Hazel and Jack Cole

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Introduction

Pretty much any mention of Grady and Hazel Cole describes them as the North Georgia hillbilly music duo responsible for the often-covered country-gospel song "Tramp on the Street." Considering the sustained reputation of their Biblical allegory about society's forgotten vagrants, the song alone leaves behind quite a legacy for both performers. Beyond a lone example of topical storytelling, the Coles' music and careers, as a duo or as the Cole Family Trio with youngest son Jack, exemplify a time when early country music propelled regular working-class people to radio stardom. Those radio stars became entrepreneurs in the post-depression South, translating their mastery of regional folk traditions to careers as some of country music's earliest touring and recording artists.

Those mentions of the Coles as the talents behind "Tramp on the Street," written by such scholars as Bill C. Malone and Charles K. Wolfe, establish the family as influential figures in the early development of country music. Hank Williams, the Louvin Brothers, and other artists destined for greater fame were moved enough by the family's compositions to incorporate them into their own radio programs or stage shows. Just as Georgia-based peer Pete Cassell's radio performances inspired a young Eddy

Arnold, the Coles are among the numerous "hillbilly" acts that first influenced country stars who'd transcend the prior era of sheet music and 15-minute radio spots.

As archetypal country singers, featuring at times an early example of a child singing star, the Coles' career deserves a closer look beyond the one obvious song. From their debut on WRGA radio in Rome, Georgia in the 1930's to the fading popularity of hillbilly broadcasts in the 1950's, the family represented various trends. They were mill workers turned country stars, building a family business that dominated their youngest son's childhood. When the earliest record labels were inviting rural entertainers to big cities to cut 78 RPM records, the Coles got the call from RCA Victor. As Scripps-Howard owned WNOX in Knoxville, Tennessee developed into one of the South's prime destinations for hillbilly musicians and comedians, the entire family relocated there for a high-profile gig. Sadly, as the vices of the road grounded many careers to a halt, the Coles' run as secular entertainers ended.

It should be noted that the Coles' youngest son Jack is a longtime family friend. Former radio star Little Jackie Cole went on to become Brother Jack Cole, spreading the gospel in the sort of small Southern communities that helped launch his parents' careers as professional hillbilly musicians. He was my parents' pastor in the late 1970s and early 1980s, during his stints as pastor of New Antioch Baptist Church and the Rome Baptist Temple, both in Rome, Georgia. In more recent years, he served as a mentor to my older brother, a Rome-based Baptist pastor himself.

If anything, close ties to the lone living artist covered makes telling the story more difficult. Grady Cole in particular is a tragic figure, whose hard luck and poor decisions may have limited his career trajectory. Further, some of Jack Cole's memories of his time in music are hazy at best. Some of that comes from age, as Cole was 84-years-old when interviewed in January 2018. Also,

as a child used to being around his parent's career, he was not as impressed as others might have been to share a stage with someone like the Delmore Brothers, Chet Atkins, or Johnnie Wright. Some memories that'd be interesting now didn't seem worth retaining to Jack Cole.

Much of this story would be impossible to tell without the Wayne W. Daniel Special Collection at the Georgia State University Library. In 1987, Daniel, the scholar behind *Pickin' On Peachtree: A History of Country Music in Atlanta, Ga.*, donated a box full of research notes, archival photographs, and other artifacts from his time researching the Coles. Daniel's work, including his interviews with Hazel in 1981 and Jack in 1984, provide the backbone of my own research.

Ordinary Folks

When it comes to the idea of hillbilly musicians from rural areas, keeping both roots music and Southern stereotypes alive, none lived the part fuller than Grady and Hazel Cole. It was no stretch for radio stations to promote them as regular people, straight from the Piedmont South's mill culture to the airwaves. Nor was it a lie to present the Coles as believers of the Christian virtues and down-home values extolled in their songs.

Henry Grady Cole was born in LaFayette in Northwest Georgia on August 26, 1909. The son of the Rev. James M. Cole, he likely heard from birth the gospel hymns that would influence his songwriting. Cole was not from a musically-inclined family, yet he proved to be a natural after trying his hand at guitar as a teenager. A blossoming interest in writing poems paired well with his newfound musical talents, leading Cole to write his first of over 500 compositions.

The future Mrs. Cole was born Hazel Key on November 28, 1910 in Gilmer County, Georgia. She met Grady while both

worked at the Pepperell Mill in Floyd County, Georgia. The couple wed a year later. Hazel soon became Grady's singing partner and bass fiddle player, appearing on WRGA in Rome, Georgia during the 1930's.

During their time in the Rome area, the Coles' front porch picking sessions drew crowds of neighbors, all of whom likely worked at the same mill. Sometimes billed as the Country Cousins on the radio, the Coles surely seemed like a normal family to the people in Rome and Floyd County. They were just regular people, singing the types of songs other regular people learned from their grandparents. In this setting, the Coles were probably perceived as no different than a gospel quartet making the rounds at local churches would be viewed now.

Jack Olin Cole, the youngest of the couple's two sons, was born in 1933. His brother Billy was born two years earlier, but he never participated in their parent's music. Around age 3, Grady had Jack standing on a piano stool and singing along to country and gospel songs. Soon, he was singing "Fly Birdie Fly" and other age-appropriate songs as part of his parent's live broadcasts. At a time when Shirley Temple was a Hollywood attraction, and a few years before Hovie Lister was the teenage gospel sensation of independent Baptist evangelist Mordecai Ham's traveling revival, "Little Jackie" Cole gave WRGA and the family's sponsors their own home-grown child star.

Fan mail received regularly by WRGA enticed WGST in Atlanta to hire the Coles, meaning their fellow residents of Floyd Country propelled them to a larger market. In a document preserved by Daniel (box 1, folder 3), WRGA station director Jimmy Kirby wrote a letter of recommendation for the duo:

For the past two years, Grady & Hazel Cole have been featured over this station, WRGA, and, judging from fan mail, have next to the largest audiences of live talent shows on this station.

I endorse Grady & Hazel Cole for their type of show and sincerely believe that you will not go wrong in featuring them.

Products of the Time

Like other early country singers, the Coles' career was dependent on changing radio markets, when necessary. Although the family went on to have numerous songbooks and records to its name, radio was needed to line up such merchandise and play out enough to sell these products. Like the country singers of today who go from open mic nights to larger venues, the Coles sought a bigger audience by pursuing a fanbase outside of Northwest Georgia.

After Rome, the Coles relocated to Atlanta to perform on WGST. A major transportation hub, Atlanta was one of the major cities for the dissemination of country music at the time. The move better exposed Grady's talents to such influential peers as fellow North Georgia gospel legend and Oak Ridge Boys founder Wally Fowler, vocalist and one-time songwriting partner Pete Cassell, and fiddling contest era mainstay turned post-war radio star Riley Puckett. Grady co-wrote a song included on most Cassell compilations titled "A Message to the One I Love." In addition, he helped compose the unreleased Puckett song "True Love is Hard to Find."

Although WGST lacked the signal power and social clout of Atlanta's WSB, the Coles excelled at their new radio home. Grady once claimed to have received an average of 75 cards and letters per day from several different Southern states. By their last year at the station, the Coles were paid a weekly sustaining fee of $30, or about $500 base pay by today's numbers, to keep them in Atlanta (Daniel, 160).

After other stops, including Dalton, Georgia; Gadsden, Alabama; and Chattanooga, the Cole family's reputation earned

them a spot on one of the region's most influential radio stations. WNOX in Knoxville, Tennessee became a major player in live hillbilly music under the watch of announcer and talent connoisseur Lowell Blanchard. When the Coles made it to WNOX in the mid-1940's as part of the popular "Tennessee Barn Dance" radio broadcast and live show, the talent roster was staggering. Johnnie Wright (the husband of Kitty Wells and one-half of Johnnie and Jack), the Delmore Brothers, and a young Chet Atkins were there, as was Puckett and Fowler. While in Knoxville, the Coles teamed with Lost John Miller and the Allied Kentuckians for a transcribed program heard on over 144 stations nationwide. As a young teenager, Jack Cole often sang on the air with Miller's group, which was named for Chattanooga's Allied Drug Company (Daniel, 160).

As a whole, the Coles' radio career exemplified the times. The family would work a market for a few years, appearing at every church or auditorium within driving distance to make money and promote their radio program. Sponsors would help fund a program, usually running for just 15 minutes. Success in a market was measured by live attendance and the amount of fan mail received at the radio station. If those numbers dipped, an act would have to relocate to a different market. Perhaps this need to move around frequently benefitted family singing groups, as it would have been easier for Grady to convince his wife and children to move for the greater good than it would have been to convince other families to do the same.

Grady's songwriting talents deserve credit for the whole family's adaptability to different radio markets. He wrote or co-wrote over 500 songs in his life. Although many of them featured spiritual themes, he also wrote the sort of sentimental songs of home and country that grabbed rural audiences' attention in the 1930's and 1940's. In addition, he wrote topical songs relevant

to the fears of Southern society during World War II. While "A Tramp on the Street" aged well for its timeless interpretation of the stories of Lazarus and Jesus, such topical song titles as "The Devil and Mr. Hitler" and "You Won't Know Tokyo When We Get Through" stirred patriotic emotions at the time (Daniel, 159).

When major labels set up makeshift recording studios in major urban areas to capture hillbilly and blues musicians' recordings, Grady and Hazel Cole got the call from RCA Victor. The couple cut six sides at Atlanta's Kimball House Hotel, including the first known recording of "Tramp on the Street," on Thursday, August 24, 1939. For "Tramp on the Street," the duo was joined by guitarist Curley Hicks and accordion player Elmer Hicks. It's unclear if these other musicians worked for the label or were local acquaintances of the Coles. Other songs cut that day were "Will You Think of Me?," "Brother, Be Ready For that Day," "You Can Be a Millionaire With Me," "I'm Building a Home, Sweet Home," and "I Want to Live Like Daddy" (Russell and Pinson, 217).

A return trip to record six more songs occurred on Tuesday, February 6, 1940. Less is known about this session, which led to recordings of "Shattered Love," "Precious Thoughts of Mother," "Forbidden Love," "What a Change One Day Can Make," "I'm On My Way to the Holy Land," and "A Beautiful Dream." Songs from both sessions were released on 78 RPM records on two of RCA Victor's discount priced imprints, Bluebird and Montgomery Ward (Russell and Pinson, 217).

Even less is known about sessions about a decade later, recorded when Grady, Hazel, and Jack performed together as the Cole Family Trio. Several gospel songs were recorded by that lineup. Jack sang lead while Hazel sang alto and Grady handled baritone on "I'm Getting Ready For Heaven," "I'll Follow Jesus All the Way," and other gospel originals either written or co-written by Grady. Those two songs appeared on a split record with

the Maddox Brothers and Rose on the 4 Star Imprint. Similar sides issued by the Gilt-Edge label likely came from this same session.

Another means to promote the family's music and make some extra money was sheet music and song books. A barometer of widespread popularity before recorded music became widely available, printed versions of the family's music furthered Grady and Hazel's reputations while providing something to sell to fans at live appearances. These books included 1945's *Grady and Hazel Cole's Blue Ridge Mountain Songs* (Chart Music Publishing House, Chicago) and several other titles. *Blue RIdge Mountain Songs* mixes charming tunes by Grady and Hazel ("I'm Just a Hillbilly at Heart" and "I Want to Be a City Slicker") with lyrics and music for such old standards as "I've Been Working on the Railroad" and "The Old Gray Mare" and even a song written by WRGA's master of hillbilly ceremonies, Jimmy Kirby ("There's a Little White House on the Side of the Hill)").

Grady's entrepreneurial spirit extended beyond wanting to make the most of opportunities to be published or recorded. Throughout his career, he offered such services as setting others' poems to music and even created his own mail-order guitar lessons, operating at different times through the Moreland Publishing Company in Atlanta's Little Five Points district and through his own Liberty Music Service in Lindale, Georgia, "where your music problem is our business." At his best moments as a professional musician, Grady Cole defined what's now called a "do it yourself" spirit, going above and beyond to spread and monetize his talents as a performer and instructor.

Little Jackie Cole

Like many children known for sharing their talents in a field dominated by grown-ups, Jack Cole had a complicated relationship with his parents' music careers. Since older brother

Billy froze up if put in front of a microphone, Jack was his parents' last hope to add a special attraction to a radio and stage show built around family values and child-like faith. Although Jack has fond memories of his time with his parents and is proud of his father's body of work, he feels as if he was forced into the music business as soon as he could walk and talk.

Due to their parents' need to move from radio market to radio market every few years, the Cole brothers changed schools often. For Jack, this was especially challenging. Whenever he changed schools, bullies already knew the new singing star in town was embarrassingly billed as "Little Jackie."

While he likely wasn't forced into free labor out of spite, some of Jack's sparse memories find him front-and-center as his father furthered his own money-making goals. At live appearances, Jack would often work the merchandise table as a means to charm fans into buying song books. Fans would give the child star enough quarters to fill all of his pockets. To Jack's disappointment, Grady always made him empty his pockets completely once they got home for the night.

As he got older and developed into a talented gospel singer and songwriter in his own right, Jack became a troubled young man. Per a booklet about Jack's life titled *Walking in the Light*, a major change in attitude came after he was arrested in East Point, Georgia for an unspecified crime. The following Saturday, August 28, 1948, Jack gave his life to the Lord at an old-fashioned cottage prayer meeting held at his parent's house.

A few years after he began living the songs he sang on the radio, Jack made a tough decision. He broke his father's heart by saying he was tired after spending nearly a lifetime as part of his parents' music career. Jack opted instead to pursue a regular job. There, he met future wife Audrey Cheatham. The couple wed on September 20, 1951.

Jack later felt the call to preach, beginning his ministry in 1957. Ironically, the constant travel that helped drive him away from music became part of his life again, as he, Audrey, and their three children moved around a lot. In the decades that followed, he pastored various churches in Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas. Jack believes that the Lord prepared him for these moves through his time as a travelling hillbilly performer.

As part of his ministry, Jack often sang his family's gospel songs as the "special" solo performance in between the choir and the sermon. The classic Grady and Hazel Cole song "You Can Be a Millionaire With Me" was heard in churches Jack pastored, as was such later Cole Family Trio songs he had a hand in writing such as "There Will Never Be Another Like Jesus." A moving version of the latter closes out the CD and cassette Jack recorded in the '90's as a quartet with Audrey and their daughters Reatha and Yvonne.

"Only A Tramp..."

Although Grady and Hazel's music and importance transcends "Tramp on the Street," presumed interest in their broader story hinges on how far their best-known composition spread at different times among hillbilly, country, gospel, bluegrass, and folk performers and listeners. Jack Cole said that over 20 cover versions were counted at one point. That number might actually be low, as the figure was tallied in the 1980's. Now, with Discogs and other online sources, it's easier to dig up such obscure versions as the one by British folk singer Pauline Filby (from her 1969 album *Show Me a Rainbow*), further proving the song's seemingly incalculable reach.

The Coles' most recognizable composition comes from two sources: The Bible and a pre-existing poem and song. A poem titled "Only a Tramp" ran in the *Sacramento Daily Union* newspaper on June 16, 1877. It contained lines adapted for the Cole's chorus: "Somebody's Darling and somebody's son; somebody rocked him,

a baby to sleep." Sheet music by its writer, Dr. Adison Crabtre, followed, with that song covered on early recordings by Uncle Pete & Louise and others.

Grady and Hazel took the song's overall theme and wrote something that better reflected Christian beliefs and the Depression Era prominence of vagrants in both urban and rural areas. Just as the Carter Family, Roy Acuff, and others popularized "Wabash Cannonball," an updated take on 19th century composition "The Great Rock Island Route," the Coles brought new life to an old concept. In the process, they crafted a then-modern folk tune that'd outlast the days of hillbilly radio broadcasts.

Despite never commercially recording the song, Hank Williams' version of "Tramp on the Street," as heard on the "Health and Happiness" radio show circa 1949, ensured the song's staying power within country music (Rogers and Gidroll, 283). Most of the scattered mentions of Grady and Hazel Cole in history books identify them simply as the writers of one of Williams' better gospel songs. Only Williams biographer Colin Escott provides an opinion on the Coles' version, and it's very negative. To Escott, the original "Tramp on the Street" recording "is like a parody of a hillbilly record" with a message strong enough that it "survived the indignities the Coles inflicted upon it." Escott further praises Williams for "changing the Coles' geeky waltz into a haunting piece that was an even more direct tug at the heartstrings" (Escott, 49).

"Geeky" or not, the Coles' arrangement did take a back seat when it came to country singers' introduction to "Tramp on the Street." One of the better-known versions of the song by a female singer was by Molly O' Day. The Cumberland Mountain Folks singer learned the song from Williams during his time with WSFA in Montgomery, Alabama (Rogers and GIdroll, 283).

Another version lost to history is Bill Carlisle's 1948 recording. Despite the fame of the Williams and Joan Baez

versions, only Carlisle's cover was a top 15 hit. Carlisle, known in part for his more humorous material, is yet another WNOX alum and a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Beyond Williams, O'Day, and Carlisle, numerous other soloists cut country music renditions of the Cole family's most famous composition, including Hank Thompson and Little Jimmy Dickens. Beyond commercially recorded versions, there's no telling how many other stars might have performed the song live or on the radio over the years. For example, a search of the song title in the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's archives led to an audio clip of Roy Acuff singing the song during a live radio appearance.

Naturally, the Coles' song also suited country music's other family singing groups. Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper recorded a popular version of "Tramp on the Street" in 1953 and included the song in their repertoire while performing on the Grand Ole Opry. The Maddox Brothers and Rose cut a couple of great versions in the 1940's. The Maddox family originally hailed from the Sand Mountain region of northeast Alabama before hitchhiking to California in 1933, so it's not out of the question to think that they might have learned about the songs of Grady and Hazel Cole through family or former neighbors. Fellow Sand Mountain native Charlie Louvin told biographer Charles Wolfe that the Louvin Brothers' cover of Grady Cole's composition "What a Change One Day Can Make" was inspired in part by hearing the Coles' broadcasts on Rome's WRGA (Wolfe, 94).

The Coles and their radio peers made music that informed not just the commercial boom of country music, but also the creation and popularization of Southern gospel and bluegrass. Georgia-born gospel family groups the Sego Brothers and Naomi and the Lewis Family each recorded a version of "Tramp on the Street" that suited their chosen genre's multi-part harmonies. Bluegrass

groups, known to keep alive the old tradition of mixing sacred and secular songs into their sets, also favored the song. Two of the better bluegrass versions are by fellow WNOX alum Carl Story and Lester Flatts' post-Flatt & Scruggs outfit, the Nashville Grass.

The song's message of sympathy toward poor vagrants made it prime material for folk singers. Influential song interpreter Ramblin' Jack Elliot recorded the song as early as 1961, helping introduce it to a new scene of performers. By decades' end, the surging folk revival had introduced the Coles' best-known composition to a younger and presumably liberal-minded audience. Peter, Paul, and Mary cut an upbeat, organ-driven version in 1968 that resembled the church music heard by Jack Cole every Sunday and Wednesday.

Joan Baez recorded perhaps the second best-known version for 1969's *David's Album*. She added a new final verse that laments the struggles of homeless veterans. Her version has other ties to Atlanta's country music history, with steel guitarist Pete Drake and guitarist Jerry Reed among the Nashville session musicians heard on the recording.

The folk revival years found many older musicians, namely African American blues pickers and gospel singers, discovered by a new generation of traditionalists. One group benefitting from this practice was the Staples Singers, who'd beat both Baez and Peter, Paul and Mary to the studio with their 1967 recording of the Coles' famed country-gospel opus. Oddly, Jack Cole says that his father was never contacted back then about performing "Tramp on the Street" at folk festivals, despite that scene's acknowledgement of the song. Mike Seeger and the New Lost City Ramblers revived the career of Cousin Emmy, an old-time fiddler with Georgia ties, so such an offer for the Coles would not have been out of the ordinary.

Conclusion

A biographical statement by Grady Cole, preserved in Wayne W. Daniel's collection at Georgia State (box 1, folder 1), portrays the sudden end of his family's music career as a journey back to his own Christian faith. Despite the later years of their careers being spent with the Rev. Charlie Petite's ministry, Grady looked back on those times as a rebellious period. Whether it was divine intervention or not, things did nearly turn tragic in the 1950's.

First came an unspecified accident that nearly broke Grady's neck before the family's move to Knoxville. In the accident's aftermath, Grady suffered nerve damage and had half of his stomach removed. Things only got worse as a sinus infection later scared Grady into spending part of the family's savings on doctors, despite never finding a permanent cure. Bad headaches followed, which Grady could only curb by drinking alcohol. A few drinks for his health became drinking in excess.

As his drinking problems increased, Grady briefly separated from Hazel. He wrote her that was in and out of "jails, work camps, and alcoholic institutions all over the country." When seeking help for his drinking, Grady experienced delirium tremens twice. He likened these severe cases of alcohol withdrawal to "a little sample of what Hell is going to be like."

The most surreal part of Grady's testimony followed, and it surely saved his life:

Finally one night about 2 A.M. I opened my eyes drunk on a railroad track. The glean of the headlight and the whistle of the oncoming train caused me to look up. I looked up into the heavens and cried out to God to please save me from a drunkard's grave. I realized that the Bible says that no drunkard can enter the kingdom of Heaven.

Well, I don't know what happened in the next few seconds, but when the train had gone by I found myself lying some distance from the tracks, looking up and thanking God for saving me.

Although Grady's radio career ended around this time, he continued teaching music and writing songs until a series of strokes forced him into a Roswell, Georgia nursing home. According to Jack, after Grady's health problems made it hard for him to communicate or remember details, the nursing home staff could still get him to clearly sing "Tramp on the Street." Grady died on August 31, 1981, just five days after his 72nd birthday.

Later in the 1980s, financial woes faced by Hazel and Billy had the family questioning why they no longer received royalty checks. Before Grady's health declined, he sometimes received checks from C.V. Clark's New York-based Dixie Publishing Company. According to Jack, whenever checks would slow down, Clark would quell Grady's concerns by mailing him $500 or $1,000.

With the encouragement of Chattanooga-based gospel pianist John Louis Kell, Jack investigated whether or not the family was owed money. Upon C.V. Clark's passing, it was discovered that additional money did exist in an account. Eventually, Hazel was given a lump sum of $5,500 around 1991, with the promise of future royalties. In addition, Jack won the rights to his parent's songs in court. Today, if you Google search "Dixie Publishing Company," the first result shows Jack's residential address in Calhoun, Georgia.

The Cole family has gotten its due at times since Grady's passing. Hazel, who passed away on December 4, 2003 at age 93, lived to see her family's 1987 induction into the Atlanta Country Music Hall of Fame. In 2005, the National Old Time Music Hall of Fame—part of the Pioneer Music Museum in Anita, Iowa—inducted both Grady and Jack Cole. Jack made the drive with Audrey and sang "Tramp on the Street" during the ceremony.

Even with those accolades, the Cole family's music seems overlooked. It's odd that over the years, no reissue label has gathered the family's sacred and secular recordings for a career anthology. After all, many of Grady's peers, such as Pete Cassell and Riley Puckett, have had their music released numerous times on CD and vinyl compilations—without the benefit of backstories that involve the likes of Hank Williams. Perhaps more than just "Tramp on the Street" would resound today with fans of old-time roots music.

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Moon Mullican: Country Piano from Western Swing to Rock 'n' Roll

By Tim Dodge
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Moon Mullican is now a largely forgotten figure, which is unfortunate, since he played an important part in the development of country piano music from the mid-1930's to the late 1950's. The following exploration into the piano playing of Moon Mullican during this era is, of necessity, an incomplete picture of Mullican as a country artist. In addition to being an innovative, outstanding pianist, Mullican was a very good singer with a pleasantly assertive baritone voice. The focus here will be on his up tempo boogie-woogie type of recordings but it should be noted that Moon Mullican also recorded a large number of honky-tonk ballads and that his biggest hit was in this vein. "I'll Sail my Ship Alone" recorded on the King label in 1949, became a country hit in 1950. He recorded it again in 1956. Two of his ballads that are particularly appealing are "Foggy River" (recorded first by Jimmie Lawson on Columbia in 1946) and the haunting "There's a Chill on the Hill Tonight," (recorded in 1940 by Jimmie Davis on Decca), both recorded for the King label in 1947. The piano playing heard on such records is more in the honky-tonk style similar to that heard on, for example, early recordings by William "Lefty" Frizzell (1928-1975) played by Madge Suttee such as "I Love you a Thousand Ways" recorded for Columbia in 1950 or "Look What Thoughts will Do" on Columbia from 1951.

Aubrey "Moon" Mullican was born March 29, 1909 and grew up in the very small town of Corrigan, Texas in Polk

County, located around 60 miles north of Houston, the son of Oscar Luther Mullican, a farmer, and Virginia Mullican. Moon (the origins of the nickname are unclear) also had two sisters. Oscar Mullican was an elder in the Lutheran church and was a strict father to his children. He purchased a pump organ for his daughters to learn to play so they could perform in church. Moon took an interest in the instrument too but incurred his father's wrath when he used it to play blues rather than church hymns. An early and important musical influence on Moon was a local African American sharecropper named Joe Jones who played blues guitar. It is unclear if Jones was a tenant on Oscar Mullican's farm or just happened to be located in the area. Having an African American musical mentor appears in the life story of at least a few other important figures in country music. Hank Williams (1923-1953), of course, learned something about blues guitar and song from Rufus "Tee-Tot" Payne (1884-1939) on the streets of Georgiana, Alabama as a youngster. Carl Perkins (1932-1998), grew up in rural poverty in Tennessee and associated with African American sharecroppers. Charlie Rich (1932-1995), growing up in slightly better economic circumstances in rural Arkansas than Perkins, also acknowledged the musical influence of African Americans. While his style of piano playing is a bit different from Mullican's, one can hear the African American as well as church influences in his playing. Certainly, Jimmie Rodgers (1897-1933) learned something from African American railroad workers whom he encountered in his youth as a railroad brakeman. Without being imitative, Rodgers's "blue yodels" and bluesy guitar playing indicate a deep familiarity with African American blues.

Unfortunately, Oscar Mullican did not appreciate his son's growing love of the blues probably both because it was "the devil's music" and because it was African American music. Consequently,

Moon left home at age 16 and embarked on what would become a decade of musical apprenticeship in Gulf Coast Texas speakeasies, honky-tonks, African American juke joints, and with the end of Prohibition in 1933, bars. Considering this was the height of the Jim Crow era and that Mullican was a white man located in Texas, it was a fairly unusual path to take. However, this early experience would provide Moon with a rich musical background from which to draw as he moved into the realm of professional musician and recording artist.

Also during this decade of musical development, Moon Mullican was at the right place and time when the genre of Western Swing began to take off in the early 1930s with the rise of highly influential groups such as the Light Crust Doughboys, Milton Brown (1903-1936) and his Musical Brownies, and Bob Wills (1905-1975) and his Texas Playboys began performing and recording. (Both Brown and Wills started out with the Light Crust Doughboys before forming their own units). The delightful combination of country, Western, blues, jazz, with occasional additions of Mexican sounds as well as polkas provided a natural musical home in Western Swing for Moon Mullican. He soon began performing with fiddler Clifton "Cliff" Bruner (1915-2000) and his Texas Wanderers. In fact, Mullican and Bruner would enjoy a very unstable and very frequent on-and-off collaboration lasting about a decade from the mid-1930's to the mid-1940's. However, Mullican's first recording was made with Leon "Pappy" Selph and the Blue Ridge Playboys in 1936 on the Vocalion label on "Gimmie my Dime Back." Backing the somewhat laconic vocals on this rapid, mostly minor-key jazzy recording, Mullican supplies competent but unremarkable piano somewhat similar to the playing of other Western Swing pianists of the era such as Fred "Papa" Calhoun (1904-1987) who recorded with Milton Brown, Al Strickland (1908-1986) who recorded with Bob Wills, or John

"Knocky" Parker (1918-1986) who recorded with the Light Crust Doughboys.

Moon Mullican's experience performing in African American entertainment venues is evident in the truly bluesy quality he brings to both his piano playing and his singing on "Kangaroo Blues" recorded with Cliff Bruner's Texas Wanderers on the Decca label in 1937. This was the first time Mullican's vocals appeared on record. Singing in an authoritative baritone, Mullican addresses the charms of his woman who "walks just like a kangaroo." His piano solo on this mid-tempo recording is thoroughly steeped in the blues and suggests the influence of African American blues pianists such as Eurreal "Little Brother" Montgomery (1906-1985) or Roosevelt Sykes (1906-1983) and perhaps, less obviously, Leroy Carr (1905-1935). It is possible in his decade of musical apprenticeship that Mullican encountered in person one or more of these pianists in addition to listening to their recordings. Another representative example of Mullican's bluesy style appears in his lead vocals and piano soloing on "Truck Driver's Blues" also recorded with Cliff Bruner's Texas Wanderers on the Decca label. This record is likely the first example of a sub-genre within country music, the truck driving song.

Moon Mullican's 1940 recording of "Pipeliner's Blues" on the Conqueror label as a member of the Sunshine Boys marks the arrival of a fully identifiable Moon Mullican sound. He would record at least three versions of the song and it also featured to signal a late life comeback in the early 1960's after a period of ill health. "Pipeliner's Blues" became something of a theme song for Mullican. The 1940 version prominently features Mullican's pleasant baritone vocals as well as his lively blues-based piano on this up tempo tune. The lyrics portray a hard-working and hard-loving blue collar figure who has "four or five women waitin' to draw my pay." His piano playing is solid and provides a rocking

accompaniment to his declarative verses. The Sunshine Boys contribute very enjoyable electric guitar and fiddle as well.

During the war years Moon Mullican continued his frequent on-and-off musical relationship with Cliff Bruner in various combinations of the Texas Wanderers or simply working together as a duo throughout the Gulf Coast region and beyond. He also made recordings with Western Swing artists such as Buddy Jones (1902-1956) and Charles Mitchell. He began performing with Jimmie Davis (1899-2000) which led to his serving as pianist for Davis during Davis's successful run for governor of Louisiana in 1944. Mullican was paid the rather significant sum of $10,000 for his work for Davis. Mullican invested this money in slot machines in New Orleans but, unfortunately, lost the machines when gangsters removed them. This financial setback was soon followed by a successful decade of recording and performing that proved to be the high water mark of his musical development.

Moon Mullican made several dozen recordings between 1946 and 1956 for the King label and his piano playing made a definite transition from Western Swing to Rock 'n' Roll. His first recording session for King, in 1946, was a marathon, producing 18 sides. One of the first sides released was "Lonesome Hearted Blues," a rather jaunty tune despite the sad theme. This breezy recording features Mullican playing a rocking primarily two note left hand bass beat while playing a bluesy and inventive treble note right hand. This is not really boogie woogie due to the absence of a true rolling bass pattern or ostinato but it is propulsive and hints at the coming emergence of rock 'n' roll. "Shoot the Moon" is an excellent instrumental featuring electric guitar and fiddle in addition to Mullican on the piano. "Shoot the Moon" is a rapid piece somewhat like the high-speed country boogie piano workouts of Merrill Moore (1923-2000), a boogie woogie pianist from Iowa with an amazing left hand who started his recording

career on Capitol in the early 1950s. Another pianist employing the emerging boogie woogie sounds of what became rock 'n' roll during this era was Roy Hall (1922-1984) of West Virginia who started his recording career on the Fortune label before moving to Decca. Backed up by his band, the Cohutta Mountain Boys, Hall recorded some very appealing and powerful country boogie numbers starting in 1949 before recording actual rock 'n' roll, including a pre-Jerry Lee Lewis version of "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On.". Of course, this Roy Hall is not to be confused with the North Carolina Roy Hall (1907-1943) and the Blue Ridge Entertainers who recorded mountain music/early bluegrass in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Moon Mullican more clearly produces an early form of rock 'n' roll piano on his "Cherokee Boogie" (King, 1950). This lively recording starts off with Mullican providing a long and enjoyable piano introduction and even during his vocals the piano accompaniment remains prominent. The two piano solos are very appealing and he launches into brief forays of boogie woogie with his left hand bass patterns when he is not maintaining his usual propulsive two-note rocking pattern. The song itself concerns what might now be called a cross-cultural exchange as Mullican starts off, "Old Cherokee chief as he dances along, he sings an Indian boogie to a white man's song saying, 'Hey ho elena…'" Interestingly, when Benjamin "Bull Moose" Jackson (1919-1989), an important African American rhythm and blues singer and saxophonist, recorded it shortly after on the King label, he leaves off the reference to "a white man's song," substituting the line "Old Cherokee chief as he dances along he does an old Indian boogie while he sings the song…" Whether this was Jackson's idea or, perhaps that of King label owner Sidney "Sid" Nathan (1904-1968), this may have reflected sensitivity to the marketing of the record to an African American audience. However, unlike

Mullican's original, Jackson's version starts off with a couple of rather stereotypical falsetto Indian war whoops, so the potentially awkward racial connotations are still there for the twenty-first century listener.

"Cherokee Boogie" also appealed to Hank Williams, who was a friend of Mullican's. Although Williams never recorded a commercially released version, he apparently did use "Cherokee Boogie" in his live performances as live and radio show transcriptions indicate. On one of these Williams suggests that "I've got a little Indian in me…"

The Mullican – Williams interchange was apparently not limited to "Cherokee Boogie." Some allege that Mullican is the actual composer of Hank Williams's very popular "Jambalaya (On the Bayou)" recorded for M-G-M in 1952 and which remains one of Williams's most popular recordings to this day. The possibility that Mullican may have been the originator of "Jambalaya" is quite plausible considering the relaxed declarative structure of the lyrics and its use of Cajun French-derived words.. Melodically, it sounds like several Moon Mullican recordings, for example, "Good Deal, Lucille" recorded for King in 1954. Another possible clue that Mullican is the composer of "Jambalaya" is the use of Cajun French terms. One of Mullican's biggest hits was "New Jole Blon" recorded for King in 1946 which hit big in 1947. This was an answer record to the original "Jole Blon" recorded by Harry Choates (1922-1951) in 1946 on the Gold Star label which became something of an anthem to Cajun culture. Mullican employs the same melody but uses different words including some Cajun French and also made-up nonsense lyrics and words parodying Choates's original lyrics, for example," como ca va cup of coffee, jole blon". In some ways it is a rather silly record but it did sell well. It also shows Mullican's easy familiarity with the music and at least some Cajun French.

From about 1950 onward, Moon Mullican's piano playing on his up tempo records is, in essence, rock 'n' roll as are his vocals. In 1952 he recorded a new version of his 1940 original "Pipeliner's Blues," this time on the King label. His piano definitely rocks and the record as a whole is even livelier than the original version from a dozen years earlier. During the early to mid-fifties Mullican recorded both original recordings that had the developing sound of rock 'n' roll, and occasional remakes of rhythm and blues songs first recorded by other artists. It was not uncommon for Syd Nathan (1904-1968), owner of the King label, to have his country artists record their own versions of recordings that had been made by his African American rhythm and blues artists and vice-versa. Roy Brown (1925-1981) who first came to fame on the Deluxe label in 1947 with the original version of "Good Rocking Tonight" (which became a major R. & B. hit when King R. & B. artist Wynonie Harris (1913-1969) recorded it and which Elvis Presley (1935-1977) turned into a credible rockabilly remake on Sun in 1954) wrote and recorded the amusing romp, "Grandpa Stole my Baby," on King in 1953. Shortly after, Mullican recorded his own rollicking version that rocked at least as hard as Brown's original and showcased his strong piano playing.

However, the King label did not really market Moon Mullican as a rock 'n' roll artist until 1956, likely, because they still considered him to be primarily a country artist. Ironically, this was the year they dropped him from their roster. In 1956 Mullican recorded the outstanding "Seven Nights to Rock." Backed up by Boyd Bennett (1924-2002), and who had enjoyed his own major rock 'n' roll hit, "Seventeen," on King in 1955) and his Rockets on drums, bass, and saxophone, Mullican starts off the record with pounding piano before launching into a vigorous recitation about having a different girl for each night of the week. His piano solo rivals anything that newly emerging piano rockers such as

Little Richard (Penniman, 1932-) or Jerry Lee Lewis (1935-) were recording at this time and the use of saxophone in "Seven Nights to Rock" fully confirms that this is indeed, a rock 'n' roll recording. Despite sounding completely up-to-date and fully as exciting as anything else by his contemporaries, Mullican was dropped by King shortly thereafter and "Seven Nights to Rock" sank into undeserved obscurity.

Mullican continued in his attempts to appeal to a rock 'n' roll audience when he moved to the Coral record label. His 1958 "Moon's Rock" is another true rock 'n' roll classic in sound and, like "Seven Nights to Rock," explicitly uses the word "rock" in its title and lyrics. His piano solo also is one of the few times where his left hand plays a true boogie woogie bass pattern. Once again, there is a hot saxophone accompaniment too but, sadly, "Moon's Rock" also failed to appeal to a wide audience. Perhaps, the Coral label and before them the King label marketers may have realized that, despite the high quality of his piano playing and singing, Moon Mullican, in terms of looks, did not have the visual appeal they could use to market him to the teenage audience. By 1956 and certainly by 1958, Mullican was pushing fifty and he was on the overweight side. As was true of Hank Williams, there appear to be no available photographs of him where he is not wearing a hat. Marketing a bald overweight middle-aged man to a teenage rock 'n' roll audience may have seemed an impossibility to record company executives anxious to make a dollar in what many at the time thought would be a short lived musical fad. Far better to keep marketing Mullican to a country audience where youthful Elvis Presley-like looks were not so crucial. Musically, Mullican was a known quantity, and he continued to enjoy recording opportunities on the Starday label and others in his remaining years. His last significant hit record was "Ragged but Right" in 1961 on Starday, a fine country record

featuring some nice honky-tonk piano with only a hint of the rock ‘n’ roll of which Mullican was so capable.

By the early 1960’s Moon Mullican began to experience health problems and he suffered a heart attack in 1962. Fortunately, he recovered and, at a Kansas City show in 1963, performed a powerful, exciting version of his old hit, “Pipeliner’s Blues,” to announce his comeback. Sadly, the comeback was not for long. Aubrey “Moon” Mullican died of a heart attack on January 1, 1967 at the not very advanced age of 57. His survivors included his wife, his sisters, and even his mother.

When considering Moon Mullican’s place in the history of country music, rock ‘n’ roll, and American popular music in general, one can trace a definite progression from competent, lively Western Swing to country boogie to full-blown rock ‘n’ roll in his piano playing. Mullican was by no means the only white piano player to successfully incorporate African American blues and boogie woogie but he was one of the first. Although largely forgotten today, Moon Mullican’s influence lives on. Probably his most obvious successor is Jerry Lee Lewis who also came from a rural Deep South background. Like Mullican, Lewis is equally adept at rock ‘n’ roll and country. Like Mullican, Lewis early on developed a genuine love for and an ability to perform African American blues and rhythm and blues. Rick Bragg’s recent biography of Jerry Lee Lewis states, “Jerry Lee listened to him closely, very closely, and heard in the music some of the first heartbeats of what he would one day know as rock and roll. ‘Moon Mullican knew what to do with a piano.’ And Jerry Lee was playing it in no time.”

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Blank Space: Bridging the Gap between Jane Austen and Taylor Swift by Marketing Literature through New Literacies

By Emma V. Eddy

Today, a faltering desire for reading for pleasure and for procuring information is an alarming and concerning issue in schools, raising the critical question: How do we, as teachers, inspire and motivate young women (and all students) to participate as consumers and producers in the present literary marketplace?

One of the greatest and most exciting challenges is igniting that spark within students and helping them connect to the literature, or providing sources of provocation and evocation that help them relate to the literature, empathize with the characters, and invest in the story.

With an argument rooted in the merging of theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, Gee, and Tomlinson, with the expansion of the "cultural commodity" and "contemporary cultural imagination" arguments of John Wiltshire in his *Recreating Jane Austen*, I suggest that an engagement with and investment in particular popular music can help provoke an interest in literary texts. Connection invites recreation and invention. In defending this argument, I present how both Jane Austen and Taylor Swift not only "own" their products but how they have "marked" the literary market, as well.

As a teacher at an all-women's high school, I aim to present how the use of differentiated instruction and the contemporary

works by musical artist, lyricist, and writer, Taylor Swift, can be incorporated in today's classroom to study narrative voice, examine the images and roles of women, and offer an avenue to provoke an interest in canonical texts, such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion*. By considering both the formal shared qualities of these two literary women's works and techniques used by both to market "the product," students can begin to contemplate their own identity, acquaint themselves with their own literary voice, and invest in their own education. After all, Jane Austen presents us with heroines who are readers and who want to be readers; they seek to inform themselves and form their own opinions (Weinberg). By the conclusion of each novel, each heroine knows her own mind. Within the plot of a song of Taylor Swift's, particularly a ballad, by its end, her heroine has reached new understanding, as well. What better place to start, then, than with Jane Austen?

Both Jane Austen and Taylor Swift have created a "brand" of themselves, one unconsciously and the other consciously, strategically, and purposefully. In doing so, each has fashioned a literary currency, which is valuable in today's literary and global marketplaces. As John Wiltshire might suggest in his reference to a poster offering Shakespeare and Austen as a Janus coin of sorts for English culture, I suggest that Austen and Swift might offer the same for a female presence on the spectrum of the literary marketplace (58). With each looking in opposite directions, it can be left to those of us in the present to inquire, in which direction does each look- to the past or to the future? I think it is both. If you "google" "Taylor Swift and Jane Austen," you will find that the connections made between the two are not wholly new, but I would like to make it clear that until my own epiphany, I had not engaged in an investigation, and therefore was not inspired first by another's idea. You will find that the connection is not particularly

groundbreaking, however tenacious some fervent fans of Austen have been to embrace the prospect. What I do seek to suggest and prove though is that the literary connections between these two figures and their works offer an invaluable resource to teachers and to anyone looking to inspire interest and spark in students' reading, both for academic purposes and for pleasure. As in the best lessons that teachers prepare, they usually are inspired by or inevitably result in a lesson learned by that teacher. It should be noted that I do not seek to compare the two writers' characters, only to present the formal literary and professional connections between each, as well as how the one can help recreate the other within a specific age group. In doing so, in true Austen fashion, "truths universally acknowledged" (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* 1) have arisen.

I had dismissed Taylor Swift as a serious writer (Austen, *Emma* 377). I had valued her as a musical artist and recognized her as a very successful business woman, but had not considered her a literary artist. "It was badly done, indeed!" (346). I think it safe to say that Jane Austen and her works are often viewed through a similar lens and often are viewed through the assuming lens that they are nothing more than mannered fairy tales. Indeed they are not. People who do not know Jane Austen's works believe them to be filled with the stereotypical ingredients of fairy tales. Fairy tale heroines certainly walk through the figurative inferno themselves before reaching a nirvana. I suggest that Jane Austen's heroines go through agonizing ordeals before they reach their happy ending, and to suggest that they are out of touch with reality or are superficial and light is just not true. They ought to be taken more seriously.

Educational theory will tell us that the key to expanding knowledge is to know the student and know where she or he is (in readiness and schema) and reach him or her on that level on his or

her terms and then help him or her rise to the expectations. In my experience as a teacher, while my expectations are always high and demanding, the students will always exceed them. We, as teachers, just need to know how to knock on the door. In some respects, you will find that the secret knock changes rapidly. However, it should also be noted that while technology and students' interests might change rapidly, they are still children. They are human. As lovers of literature, we can determine that the human experience and condition stand the test of time and change very little if we look at the inward journeys of characters and conflicts. In much the same way, students change very little where they hold the greatest power for connection and meaning. Students still desire to connect with each other and to the literature. They are empathetic and crave stories. This is good news, and its gives us a clue as to how to approach the door.

In his discussion of "new literacies," James Paul Gee states that "learning to read is about learning to read different types of texts with real understanding . . . you can't read a book if the content is meaningless to you" and that "humans understand content, whether in a comic book or a physics text, much better when their understanding is embodied: that is, when they can relate that content to possible activities, decisions, talk, and dialogue" (39). Therefore, if we approach students where they can "make" the most meaning, we might have the greatest success of helping to nurture life-long learners and readers. While the term might hold several definitions and explanations to its credit, in this paper, I will use "new literacies" as an open understanding that a "text" is anything that can be "read" with the use of literary elements and devices. These texts can include traditional texts such as poems, novels, articles, etc. However, "new literacies" implies that paintings, music videos, song lyrics, video games, films, and more, can be read in the same way, examining the same formal qualities, as well.

In defining a text and "new literacies," it is also helpful to define *reading* further. Reading in a literate sense is not an innate skill; however, seeking understanding, curiosity, reading the world, while they are skills that can be honed, are gifts that are naturally found within the human condition. Gee relates, "traditionalists treat learning to read as if "read" was an intransitive verb. People just "read . . . But no one just reads; rather they read something . . . Read is a transitive verb; it requires an object, a thing being read . . . When people read, they are always reading a specific type of text . . ." (39). The world can be a text, arguably the ultimate text, and essentially, we are teaching students to read so that they can *read their world*. Reading the *world* then helps them read the *word*. According to Freire, "Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world . . .[T]his movement from the word to the world is always present" (Beach et al 183). Ultimately, "we are not just teaching books. We are teaching ideas" (167). In order to help students read their world, understand it, navigate it, connect with it, engage within it, and affect it positively, we as teachers are an integral part of helping them *make meaning* to do so. The meaning is created by the connections with and between ideas, and consequently through the construction of knowledge through discovery. Because each student is an individual, this meaningful learning occurs in varied ways.

Carol Ann Tomlinson says that "in a differentiated classroom, the teacher unconditionally accepts students as they are, and she [or he] expects them to become all they can be" (10). Essentially, we are meeting students "where they are" and using this as our entrance to growth. This idea merges Piaget's Schema Theory and Vygotsky's Constructivist Theory in the sense that if we seek to find the readiness and prior knowledge of a student, use that prior knowledge to build a bridge to new material, and then allow the

student to discover this connection and construct new knowledge for him or herself, the learning is all the *more meaningful* and all the *more lasting* (Driscoll). To help this construction and building, as teachers, we must seek to build pockets of stories, not pockets of information. Students remember stories because they can find something within them that speaks to them at their cores. However, when a different social context and more formal language are a part of these stories, the openness to the stories can be narrower; there is discomfort in the unknown. This discomfort and the unknown can be conquered by *connection*. It is not that students cannot relate to the stories. No. Instead, it is that at first, some might *believe* that they cannot. By reaching and meeting students in their zones of proximal development, we can expect the most *effective* learning. By reaching students through their own meaningful schema and meaningful construction of knowledge, we can expect the most *meaningful* learning. Both approaches are necessary.

This argument of capitalizing on the popularity of Taylor Swift to bring Jane Austen to a new generation and future generations is a relatively new one, and it should be made clear that my research is just as new. Furthermore, my application and colleagues' application of this in the classroom regarding Austen is in its infancy; however, the argument is rooted deeply in theory, immense success with the same pedagogy and application while teaching Shakespeare, and use of other musical artists and music videos to teach Jane Austen. Furthermore, while initiating surveys and studies for data, it came to my attention that Austen is not as prolific in the literature curricula as I had assumed. This suggestion of pedagogy might also help to turn that tide, as well. Finally, it is important to note that I am an educator, not an academic, so my approach and lens are more pedagogical than anthropological. However, I like to think that they contain elements of both. Essentially, I believe that if we can help foster *fans* of characters

and *fans* of literature, we can help nurture life-long readers. By helping to spark emotional attachment to characters or stories within students, attention is captured, and the door is opened to more academic and formal study of the texts, and life-long reading and life-long learning have brilliant prospects.

When contemporary texts or more modern texts are used to teach canonical texts, we are in a sense *recreating* them. In his book, *Recreating Jane Austen*, John Wiltshire draws upon the ideas of Donald Winnicott, a paediatrician as well as psychoanalyst, related to the ideas of initiation and origin of creativity (6). Wiltshire employs these ideas as he argues his own points of the recreation of Jane Austen in popular culture, particularly in film. It is not necessarily the focus to relate the intimations or recreations of Jane Austen, as the process of intimation or recreation itself, and [his argument's] central task is to transfer concepts formulated in the psychoanalytic encounter into literary or cultural criticism, to transform descriptions of human psyches in their interaction into useful ways of thinking about relationships between texts, even when these texts belong to different genres or media. (7)

Through film adaptations, fandom, fanfiction, and academic study, for many, Jane Austen has become a cultural commodity and has become in a way a brand (7-8). Depending upon the marketer and consumer of this brand, the brand may take on a different face, a different logo. Individuals, because of their own experiences and lens, will, in a sense, create their own brand of "Jane." However, any number of these images and brands of Jane Austen can be a difficult sell, especially the authentic brand, because it is a time-period *seemingly* so far removed from young people today. Wiltshire "underscore[s] the belief that to possess the past it is necessary to remake it" (12). This argument for the "recreation" of Jane Austen can be employed in my argument as well in that in order for students to connect with the past, a relationship and

emotional attachment must be created and maintained if they are to understand it and use it in their further growth and study. As teachers, we must meet students where they are, tap into their schema, and start there to guide them in constructing their own knowledge.

What we can do then, in a way, is recreate Jane Austen for our students by marketing her differently. Taylor Swift to the stage, please! Taylor Swift already provides sparks of literary allusions in her own songs, in a similar way that Jane Austen includes useful and respectful bits of Shakespeare for her own purposes, for example "Queen Mab" in *Sense and Sensibility* and theatre in *Mansfield Park (*Wiltshire 64). In her own use of *Romeo and Juliet*, Taylor Swift's speaker sings,

> Romeo save me, I've been feeling so alone,
> I've been waiting for you, but you never come . . .

and alludes to Nathanial Hawthorne, "I was a "scarlet letter,"' ("Love Story") and uses the apple allusion in the video, "Blank Space" ("Taylor Swift- Blank Space").

These canonical references maintain the vitality of these works and allow them to find a niche in a new generation, allowing for these texts to belong not only to one time period, not to only one group, but to a larger culture. Like a language, when a literary commodity stops growing, stops being recreated, it in itself runs the risk of stagnation. As language continues to change and grow, we must then expect that the texts, which use that language to communicate, will continue to grow and be experienced in different ways as well. John Wiltshire suggests, "Every age of course adapts, modifies and remakes, as the history of Shakespeare's reception indicates obviously enough. Every cultural creation, even a cathedral, has an afterlife, unpredictable, uncontrolled by its original architect, when another era, another

cultural configuration, turns it, adapts it to its own uses" (3). Often times, the consumer will dictate the market. Other times, the market, through suggestion and marketing, can influence the consumer.

For today's students, the consumers, what can be a challenging sell for Austen is the past time period and its social context, which on the surface may seem to have little to do with current youth. It might seem as though it is without value, without worth, because at "first impressions," a connection cannot be seen. When a connection cannot be made, neither can emotional attachment; therefore, there is neither meaningful nor lasting learning. John Wiltshire suggests, "nostalgic or traditionalist attitudes towards "Jane Austen" are certainly a feature of her cultural reception, and perhaps grow more tenacious as the "world" she is supposed to inhabit recedes ever rapidly away" (37). This world is one that students have difficulty picturing because it is a world so seemingly far away from them. While discussing Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary*, Wiltshire remarks, "Aware of the difference between our time and Austen's, it switches and changes and finds different ways to meet similar ends- which might be defined, roughly speaking, as exploring the pressures on young women to conform to the expectations of their culture" (2). This is obviously speaking of another work, but again, the argument that Wiltshire makes for Fielding is in essence at the heart of my argument for Taylor Swift. Swift's songs offer an instrument (please excuse the pun) to help the building of a bridge between the Regency and contemporary periods because they address and present similar psyches. Austen can be "recreated" for a new generation through Taylor Swift. While Austen's novels are considered comedies of manners, and many of their conflicts at times center on the social context of the time, what Jane Austen, arguably, does best is shed light on the human condition and characters. While the mirror may

have a different frame, her novels continue to hold the looking glass to society, and the reflection has changed little in its most vulnerable and sensitive areas, what Bridget Jones might call its "wobbly bits" (*Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*).

These beautiful wobbly bits though remind us of what it means to be human, after all.

Consider what you think about when you think of Taylor Swift. Now, consider what you think about when you think of Jane Austen. With room for correction and error, I would imagine for each artist, while perhaps some of the ponderings offer a picture or representation of each, that neither Taylor Swift nor Jane Austen has been depicted in a perfectly accurate light, nor perhaps have their works. In true Austen-esque fashion, there is some misrepresentation in the portrait of each (Sabor). Each would seem to have a stigma to shake, perhaps not entirely of either's own creation, but stigmas nevertheless that need to be acknowledged and addressed if the artists are to be seen in their true lights in the literary marketplace. By using the texts in several integral ways in the classroom, the stigmas (literary) can be removed, and essentially, both writers, Austen and Swift, can benefit. Obviously, the goal of using the texts in the classroom is not necessarily in removing this stigma, but allowing for the painting of a more accurate portrait of each is helpful. It is certainly important, as truth and authenticity always are. However, what addressing these stigmas really does is twofold: students can relate to Austen's works and consequently understand them better. Additionally, by walking along side students on this journey, it can help them ask the questions that will prevent them from attaching stigmas in the first place in the future and be open to revising "first impressions." This is essential in promoting female consumers and producers in the literary marketplace. We must be informed consumers and help our students become so, as well.

At first glance, there may be little similarity seen in the formal qualities and social contexts of Jane Austen and Taylor Swift. However, as with so many things, if we allow ourselves to dig deeper, and ask the same of our students, the "blank space" between the two becomes less so. By allowing and inviting this search for connection, the benefit is long-lasting and profoundly meaningful. It should be noted that these activities and questions are posed after extensive prior study of new literacies and literary elements and devices in the class.

Jane Austen's *Persuasion* is unique in that it begins *after* an initial love story, and the plot is not centered on introducing characters and uniting them for the first time. Instead, its focus is on re-introduction, self-discovery, and *re*union (Kerr). At the novel's commencement, Anne Elliot is seven-and-twenty, and more than seven years previous to this, Anne fell in love with Captain Fredrick Wentworth as he did with her. The two were engaged, but then through the persuasion of others, and consultation of Captain Wentworth's "good," Anne reluctantly severed the engagement (29). As a testament to Anne's heart, she does so more for Captain Wentworth than herself. It is at the impending "eve" of the return of Captain Wentworth where the story begins, and the novel mimics that of a dance in its silences, looks, blushes, glances, and wonderings (Mullan). It is through self-reflection, growth, and strength that both Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot reunite. Two songs of Taylor Swift's are applicable in this case, and while the endings in both are rather ambiguous, they nevertheless offer a contemporary telling of the story of Captain Fredrick Wentworth and Miss Anne Elliot: "Back to December" and "The Story of Us."

"Back to December" reflects the silent struggle, the angst, and the reflection so potently present in *Persuasion*. The speaker

in the song can very easily be compared to Anne Elliot as she grapples with the return of Captain Wentworth to her world:

You've been good, busier than ever
We small talk, work and the weather
Your guard is up and I know why
Because the last time you saw me
Is still burned in the back of your mind . . .

This can allow students to make the connection and better understand Wentworth's recent success in the Navy and his state of mind upon his return. The song in itself can also offer a cathartic soliloquy for Anne's psyche. In *Recreating Jane Austen*, John Wiltshire allows us to see a possible connection between Shakespeare's use of soliloquy and Jane Austen's free indirect discourse. It is important to note that Wiltshire makes it quite clear that it is not his intention to prove or state that Jane Austen recreates Shakespeare in her use of free indirect discourse, soliloquy in a sense. However, he does allow the reader to examine how both writers use an interiority to know characters from the inside out (79). Austen's free indirect discourse shares the interior of Captain Wentworth, "He said it, she knew, to be contradicted. His bright, proud eye spoke the happy conviction that he was nice; and Anne Elliot was not out of his thoughts, when he more seriously described the woman he should wish to meet with. "A strong mind, with sweetness of manner," made the first and last of the description" (Austen, *Persuasion* 63). It is clear that Captain Wentworth still has Anne within his mind; we will come to find later that she has never left his heart either. The strong mind to which he alludes is an intended dig at Anne who was once *persuaded* to reject him. Swift's speaker says,

So this is me swallowing my pride
Standing in front of you saying I'm sorry for that night

And I go back to December all the time
It turns out freedom ain't nothing but missing you
Wishing I'd realized what I had when you were mine
I'd go back to December turn around and change my own mind
I go back to December all the time
("Back to December")

The directness of Taylor Swift's speaker would allow students to have a clearer understanding of the subtlety of Anne Elliot's voice. Even the imagery in the music video can be a point of discussion in the classroom, as Taylor Swift's character pens a letter throughout the video, and this can be connected to the ultimate letter of persuasion and declaration penned by Captain Wentworth, insisting and proving metaphysically once again that "more than kisses, letters mingle souls" (John Donne). It would seem that Taylor Swift is not a stranger to the art of letter writing herself. Vanessa Grigoriadis's article in *Rolling Stone* shares that Taylor Swift rifled around in her armoire during their interview and "careful not to show its contents, which she considers too messy for guests— and pull[ed] out a cardboard box of color wax, which she uses to seal envelopes" (352). The male protagonist in the music video of "Back to December" leaves us with the image of him contemplating the letter. The falling snow and snow-covered landscape in the music video also suggest that while it is winter, the presence of the water archetype proposes hope, renewal, and rebirth. All that is absent are the "healing waters" of Bath to complete the connection. This desire for healing, for reconnection, for renewal is also presented in Swift's, "The Story of Us."

Within "The Story of Us," students might find another soliloquy from Anne Elliot in the speaker of the song. From the very beginning, the imagery of the video itself is filled with

literary images: a university, volume-filled shelves (notably with most of them with the title of "Women" on their bound spines,) and the general activity of reading and "the story" throughout. It is most beneficial if student responses are elicited regarding the imagery and that they have the opportunity to respond with these and other observations. Regarding general connections in the novel, students can make the connection that Anne Elliot herself is a great reader and is able to discuss her reading and ideas, for example with Captain Benwick. It also opens the path of discussion to consider the idea of silence in the novel. *Persuasion* has the least amount of dialogue of all of Austen's novels (Austen, *Persuasion* ed. D. Shapard Intro.). The tension and desire between Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot is heartbreakingly deafening in the novel, and this same emotion is evident in "The Story of Us." I'd tell you I miss you but I don't know how

I've never heard silence quite this loud . . .

Swift's song allows students an opportunity to imagine the shouting of the inner voice that occurs beneath the surface. As restrained as Anne Elliot is, it does not mean that she is without feeling. It is quite the opposite. Austen writes, "They had no conversation together, no intercourse but what the commonest civility required. Once so much to each other! Now, nothing! There *had* been a time, when all of the large party now filling the drawing room at Uppercross, they would have found it most difficult to cease to speak to one another" (Austen *Persuasion*, 64). Anne Elliot continues to ponder on the past that Captain Wentworth and she shared, thinking, "there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved. Now they were as strangers; nay, worse than strangers, for they could never become acquainted. It was perpetual estrangement"

(65). In "The Story of Us," Taylor Swift's speaker relates her own inner shouts:

I used to think one day we'd tell the story of us
How we met and the sparks flew instantly
People would say, "they're the lucky ones
I used to know my place was a spot next to you
Now I'm searching the room for an empty seat
'Cause lately I don't even know what page you're on
Oh, a simple complication
Miscommunications lead to fall out
So many things that I wish you knew
So many walls up I can't break through

Now I'm standing alone in a crowded room
And we're not speaking and I'm dying to know Is it killing you like it's killing me yeah
I don't know what to say since the twist of fate
When it all broke down and the story of us Looks a lot like a tragedy now Next chapter . . .

A misconception of Austen's novels and characters is that they are cold, banal, superficial, and safe. Instead, this Swift-ian lens and voice allow students to see characters inside and out, therefore making it easier to relate to the characters as people, as humans facing the same difficulties as we do today.

One of the most poignant songs of Taylor Swift's to which my students relate is "Fifteen." I teach freshmen, and this song many times had become as an anthem for them, not because of every word ringing true but because it was a song that understood them and they it. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Lydia Bennet and Georgiana Darcy might feel the same way. From two very different families, different personalities, they find themselves under a similar spell.

Both at their respective ages of fifteen find themselves under the spell of Mr. George Wickham.

'Cause when you're fifteen,
And somebody tells you they love you,
You're gonna believe them . . .
("Taylor Swift- Fifteen")

Both might be "dancing 'round [their] room[s]" at the thought of George Wickham. Because of her brother's quick and keen attention, Georgiana is saved from potential ruin, unhappiness, and most likely further heartbreak. It would be foolish though for us to think that Georgiana's heart heals as quickly as her brother acts-- but indeed it will, and she might "realize some bigger dreams" of hers ("Taylor Swift- Fifteen"). Lydia Bennet, on the other hand, is not so fortunate to escape the clutches of George Wickham (not that she necessarily desires to do so.) However, it is the very same Fitzwilliam Darcy that again intervenes and holds Wickham accountable. Taylor Swift brings to center stage the idea that "I didn't know who I was supposed to be at fifteen." This is an important point to remember for Austen fans as well as any educator. Lydia is often criticized for her impulsive nature; however, because of the time period in which she lives, we expect more than her fifteen years (and her parents for that matter) have taught and allowed her. As teachers, it is important for us to remember that we were once fifteen and have learned a great deal since then, but our students are still fifteen. They are allowed to falter, to learn through discovery, and to do so with support, patience, and empathy.

These proposed connections between Jane Austen and Taylor Swift are by no means an exhaustive list. We might also consider "White Horse" as Marianne Dashwood's anthem, "You Belong with Me" as Fanny Price's soliloquy- even the music video captures the spirit of the selfless nature of Fanny, wishing for

Edmund's happiness rather than her own (Duquette), "Mean" for Lady Catherine and Elizabeth, and "I Knew You Were Trouble" for Elizabeth's challenges with Wickham, and perhaps the umbrella anthem of "Two is Better than One." With this said, I do not think that a song of Swift's has yet captured and connected to the relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, but I would love to see that change or to stand corrected.

Another useful activity to employ with students is to ask what songs might be on a particular character's "playlist." This extension and suspension of reality, essentially removing the ceiling for possibilities, is helpful to students when making connections and making meaning. I would like to suggest that if Austen's characters had iPods and such devices, I believe that most heroines and heroes, including Mr. Darcy, would possess at least one Taylor Swift song on a playlist.

(Shocking?)

Through these activities, students can see both artists, whether it be Austen and Swift in this case or another pairing, (Adele and Charlotte Brontë perhaps? Lady Gaga and Mary Shelley?) in a new light, particularly the classic author. Taylor Swift presents her audience with numerous characters and portrays herself as those characters. In doing so, her audience members can see themselves in her. It is in this way that Jane Austen presents heroines to her readers, her audience, as well. Instead of seeing themselves in Jane Austen, though, they see themselves in a particular character, or two, or three depending upon a circumstance. Given these different techniques, which is the more lasting? Jane Austen's characters are already immortalized on the page. Can their authors do the same for themselves on the pages of the literary marketplace?

If this approach is taken, then what "brand" is being marketed to students in each artist? Another question is, does a brand exist from and within an artist, or does it exist in the creations of that artist?

Both Jane Austen and Taylor Swift are "no one but [themselves]" in the sense that they are fully in control of their writing and have carved out an identity (377). Peter Cooper explains in his *Johnny's Cash and Charley's Pride: Lasting Legends and Untold Adventures in Country Music* that "what Swift was going to be was not what the country music industry wanted her to be. She accepted no prescriptions, and the result has been a career that is fascinating to millions and frustrating for some in country music" (158). Jane Austen did make some money from her writing, but given the technology of the time, I would suggest that she did not anticipate herself becoming an adjective and "a brand" per say. While she knew the power of the pen and the wonder of the word in politics, "a woman's world" at the time, and in connection with the reader, her marketing and even known identify was extremely different than the formidable, overt force of Taylor Swift. As the highest paid female entertainer of 2016, who attempts to lay claim to even words, it is clear that Jane Austen has obviously posthumously and unwittingly become an author with one of the greatest celebrity values (Greenburg). This is because Jane Austen's unwitting marketing of her brand comes through her enduring characters and not necessarily from the author herself. Jane Austen does not tell her readers what to think. Instead, she entrusts them with the responsibility to think for themselves, as her heroines learn to do or have always done (Weinberg). Taylor Swift, in contrast, strategically plans for her success and to maintain her identify. Both females offer themselves though as marketers of "the voice." In any one of her novels, the Austen heroine finds her voice, but she only finds it through the pursuit of knowledge and understanding and selfreflection. Taylor Swift's heroines, as well, are human. They are prone to faltering but rising again after reflection. The difference in the brands that are marketed by each artist is that Austen markets through her work. Taylor Swift markets through her work, as

well, but she also creates a brand of herself and her image. In *The Country Music Reader*, Travis D. Stimeling shares that in her 2009 feature article in *Rolling Stone*, Vanessa Grigoriadis indicates that Swift has skillfully used the media to her advantage as she has worked to articulate an artistic and personal identity to her fans and potential audiences (346). Jane Austen, due to the anonymity of the published works of the author during her lifetime, did not attempt to create or market an image of herself. Therefore, there is no image to maintain; she is "very much what [she] ever was" (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* 171). As a performer, Taylor Swift, among her other positions, in essence markets herself, as well, and therefore, this would leave a public image to cultivate and to maintain and to protect. This can be a more precarious position in which to find one's self. Jane Austen's works are timeless and lasting because of her incredible gift for understanding and presenting the human condition in a way to which we can relate. We might empathetically speculate how much of herself is within her pages. How much of her heart is on the page and how much has she kept for herself. We can see ourselves in Jane Austen's characters, and in essence, we can see ourselves in her. Taylor Swift is known for her inclusion of her own life, while still respectfully keeping the anonymity of the people in her life (McFadden). Her fans empathize with her and the self that she includes in her songs. Peter Cooper writes that "it was through her voicing of feelings that she was heard, and appreciated, and hated, and beloved" (159). Both of these women, Taylor Swift and Jane Austen, give a soulful product of themselves.

Literacy is a currency, which never loses its value. If meaningful literacy and life-long reading are going to survive various markets, inflation, and shiny, new products, then as teachers, we must guide students to invest in their learning and their reading. This investment is most successful and is only sustainable

if students engage in meaningful learning. Only then can there be growth in the market. What is to be done then? We must create fans of reading and guide students to become informed consumers and producers in the literary marketplace. Juliette Wells in

Everybody's Jane: Austen in the Popular Imagination, shares that Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington have pointed out—in terms very close to those used by reader-response critics like Berggren—fans engage with "texts not in a rationally detached but in an emotionally involved and invested way." Fandom, claims Sandvoss, is essentially "a mode of reading," one that seeks "familiarity and the fulfillment of expectations." Matt Hills reminds us, crucially that fans can be scholars and scholars fans: "The literary scholar," he reminds us, "is an ordinary readers as well as a scholar."' (Wells 23)

How is this done then? We must help our students to connect to the literature that they read, particularly canonical texts, which may not be as relatable for students. We must reach students where they are, in their zones of proximal development, and appreciate individual schemas. We must differentiate instruction so that every student has the opportunity and the call to reach his or her own potential. This is a right that all students have. We must help students know and understand themselves and discover their own voices. In order to this, we must invite students to invest in their learning. Why do we do this? By finding their own voices, students can connect with the voices of others. Connecting with and attempting to understand the voices of those around us helps us to resist "pride and prejudice" and embrace "sense and sensibility."1 This is essential in any society. If we wish students to lean into a conversation and engage themselves, then we, as teachers, must be the first to lean in2. It is not about what product is shiny and new (with the understanding and acknowledgment that new products and technologies can be very useful and meaningful.) Instead, it is what makes students *feel*.

It is not what will hold their attention for a forty-minute period or for a unit or for a year. No. The question is: What will hold their hearts for a lifetime? The examination and discussion of Jane Austen and Taylor Swift is not the answer. It is not an end, nor for many is it a beginning. I am continually amazed by the incredible work of my colleagues and teachers around the world and how they are able to inspire their students, to ignite that spark of an eternal flame. Indeed, I ride on their coat tails. However, I hope what this discussion helps to do is to continue the conversation and makes a contribution to decrease the debt, the "blank space," between Taylor Swift and Jane Austen. One of my favorite adaptation, recreations, of Jane Austen is Nora Ephron's *You've Got Mail*, staring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. After Joe Fox (Hanks) has forced Kathleen Kelly (Ryan) out of business, he pays her a visit. Trying to make amends, he explains that "it wasn't personal." Nettled, affronted, and confused, Kathleen Kelly replies, "Ugh, what is that supposed to mean? I'm so sick of that. All that means is that it wasn't personal to *you*, but it was personal to *me*. It's *personal* to a lot of people. What is so wrong with being personal anyway?" Joe Fox's replies, "Ah, nothing." Kathleen Kelly affirms, "Because whatever else anything is, it ought to begin by being personal" (*You've Got Mail*).

If we are going to guide our students as they begin to write the future story of our society, we must help them discover the personal connections with and within texts, both new literacies and canonical texts. Canonical texts reflect our foundation as a society, as a civilization, in its various forms with its heroic triumphs and its dark failings. They hold the mirror to society and ask us to reflect on where we have been. Until we face and reflect on what we see in the mirror, we will not know how to go forward. Only through connection and meaning will students see literature, both contemporary and canonical, as a worthwhile investment.

"Next chapter . . ." ("The Story of Us").

Notes:

Phrasing and idea inspired by Facebook post (picture of a standing sign from Cocoa Puro Chocolates) shared with me by a colleague in June, 2016 after Brexit vote. Photo shared gives 28 June 2016 as a date of post.

"Lean in" in this case does not refer to the philosophy or organization or book, Lean In/*Lean In*. However, from reviewing the philosophy of the organization, it is fair to say that the idea of student engagement would also be applicable to the philosophy and culture of "Lean In." (Website: https://leanin.org/)

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The Hoffman Hayride: The Story of Dude Martin and H. Leslie Hoffman, Shaping the Growth of Television and Electronics Manufacturing in the Western United States

By Dave Sichak

The research into the Hoffman Hayride show that was originally hosted by Dude Martin over KGO-TV opened aspects that needed to be discussed beyond just the show itself. This essay will show how a local radio country music entertainer (Dude Martin) was also a catalyst for the growth of the acceptance of television in the San Francisco Bay Area. The sponsor of the show was the Hoffman Radio Corporation which began manufacturing television sets in Los Angeles. It was the brainchild of H. Leslie Hoffman who wanted to give the west coast an opportunity to become a major manufacturing center. He found success with the "live" show concept in Los Angeles where Spade Cooley was one of the original hosts but it was the success

Newspaper Ad
Hoffman Hayride
KGO-TV
May 18, 1949
San Francisco Chronicle

of the show Dude Martin hosted in the Bay Area that lasted the longest. The article also shows how Mr. Hoffman used the Hoffman Hayride concept when his company decided to enter an urban market that was beginning to develop television broadcasts.

The **Hoffman Hayride** debuted on KGO-TV (Channel 7) in San Francisco on May 11, 1949, as part of the development of television as an entertainment medium. The show that featured Dude Martin and His Round-Up Gang appears to have been one of the more successful versions of a live entertainment program that the Hoffman Radio Corporation sponsored to help promote the sale of televisions.

Later, Dude Martin went to Los Angeles, but the Hoffman people rebooted the Hoffman Hayride over KPIX-TV with a new host, Cottonseed Clark.

Dude Martin was born John Steven McSwain on a ranch in the small town of Plainsburg, about 12 miles from the city of Merced, California in the San Joaquin Valley. The ranch was partly a dairy and growing up he had chores on the ranch and had his own horse. In a 1939 song folio, Dude spoke of his parents hoping he would become a lawyer and eventually President of the United States, but his report cards did not indicate the fulfillment of his parent's dreams. His parents learned that he had broken several horses without their knowledge at the age of 10.

Dude Martin Song Folio 1939

From Hillbilly-Music.com Collection

He ended up getting his education in Oakland and San Francisco. Life would eventually take him to Berkeley.

In that 1939 song folio, he told readers that, while he enjoyed the freedom of being a cowboy, he found it "unprofitable at forty a month and beans." He was 15 at the time and decided to become an entertainer. He recruited a group of cowboy singers and they called themselves the Nevada Nightherders. Did he find success? Dude wrote, "Immediately following we were turned down by practically every radio station in the western part of the United States."

His introduction to entertainment was a vaudeville act did as part of the annual Berkeley High School program. He admired Glen Rice and His Beverly Hill Billies and during his interview with Patricia Hill as part of the Country Music Foundation Oral History project in 1976, he said Glen "was the greatest con man I've ever heard on radio." Glen would start the show with a bit of an introduction that built up to getting the audience eager to hear their music and entertainment. The gag was that the group supposedly had its roots in the remote Beverly Hills.

Dude had been doing rodeos and entertaining audiences, playing guitar and singing while a friend placed harmonica and did vocals as well. They played at bars and restaurants, passed the hat and hoped to get enough money for an entrance fee for a local rodeo type event.

Dude related how one year he decided to do a bit of a take-off on that act and created the group the Tightwad Hillbillies. The name was derived from the University of California Memorial Stadium area in Berkeley. There is or was a place known as Tightwad Hill but is actually Charter Hill where folks who could not afford tickets or did not want to pay could watch the game. His intro went like this: "While wandering up on Tightwad Hill above Strawberry Canyon, one day I came upon these simple country

folk who are believed to be descendants of early football-game fans that got lost after the big-game hunt on Tightwad Hill."

The 1939 song folio may refer to the Dude's first KLX stint. He apparently got the program slot because the station's production manager was homesick. The "slightly gullible office boy" was running things in the manager's absence and he gave Dude's group an hour's time slot. The listening audience in April 1932 must have liked what they heard because when the production manager returned to work, he had "no other alternative than to keep the program on." He indicated he did a show for about a year over KLX in Oakland. They were not paid and gas money to get to the station was getting hard to come by.

Dude met Tom Morgan, who owned the Pickwick Stage Lines, which eventually became the Greyhound Line. The company went broke in 1929 during the stock market crash. The company owned radio station KTAB (now KSFO) which had studios in San Francisco in the Pickwick Hotel. The company allowed Dude a portion of air time that he could sell as he saw fit. Mr. Morgan got the O & M Tablet Company in Pasadena to buy time on the station and wanted a western group. He found Dude and got enough of his band together to go on the air in the Bay area for nearly 20 years. For that start on KTAB, the band members got paid $6 a week and because Dude was the group leader, he got $7 a week.

The Star Outfitting Company then bought the show and moved it to KLX in Oakland. Star Outfitting saw something in sponsoring western acts because they were the sponsor for Stuart Hamblen's show in Los Angeles. Mr. Martin recalled that Star sponsored them for about five years.

Early on, it was common for entertainers to appear at movie theaters but then they started doing country dances as they saw the theater aspect fading as the 1940s evolved.

Dude stated they opened their own ballroom on December 6, 1941, East Shore Park in Richmond, California. The timing was not opportune because the next day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. They had a lease with the city for an old amusement park and were fixing it up and luck was on their side; they were only two miles from the Kaiser shipyards, which expanded rapidly to support the war effort.

Around 1939, Dude began doing nightly broadcasts over KYA, a San Francisco station. His popularity was such that at times he did a show over KTAB in the morning and an evening show over KLX for the same sponsor. He became the musical director for KYA and did a morning show called Sunrise Round-Up that was on the air from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m.

Dude's first group with the O & M Table Company show was The Nevada Night Herders, then, when he was on KYA, it was Dude Martin's Sunrise Round-Up. Later, he settled on the name Dude Martin and His Round-Up Gang.

In his oral history interview, Dude spoke of a couple of female singers who were adept at yodeling, which was popular in the late 1930s and into the 1940s. One was Arvada Miller and another was Carolina Cotton (real name: Helen Hagstrom). Carolina would later become part of the Hoffman Hayride show when Cottonseed Clark took it over.

Carolina Cotton
Sketch
Cowboy Songs No. 22
September 1952

From the Hillbilly-Music.com Collection

The Star Outfitting Company sponsorship brought prosperity to the group. Star opened a store at 1016 Broadway in Oakland and another at 1145 Market Street in San Francisco. Dude stated that he had little competition in the way of country and western music during those years in the Bay Area. They rented space in a corner store where they did their shows and people could watch through the windows as they performed if they were not lucky enough to be inside. During the depression, it was not hard to get an audience if your show was free.

KGO-TV
Newspaper Ad
Announcing On Air Debut
San Francisco Chronicle
April 26, 1949

Dude had a ranch on Redwood Road in east Oakland, which seems hard to imagine because of the growth of the city since then. He told Ms. Hill he had six acres and access to an adjoining ranch of 6,000 acres. He eventually began to get into the business of buying and selling horses.

Then a new medium called television came on the scene.

The development of TV may be viewed through the newspaper reporting of the era. Paul Speegle wrote an article

Hoffman Easy-Vision
Operating Instructions
Booklet
Circa 1950
From the Hillbilly-Music.com Collection

KPIX—TV Schedule

6:45-7 p. m.—Test Pattern and Announcements.
7-7:30 p. m.—NBC "Kukla, Fran and Ollie."
7:30-7:50 p. m.—"Vacation Interlude."
7:50-8 p. m.—Newsreel.
8-8:15 p. m.—NBC "Supper Club"—Perry Como.
8:15-End—Baseball, San Francisco vs. Sacramento.

KGO—TV Schedule

7:30—Hollywood Screen Test, Neil Hamilton, emcee.
8:00—Hoffman Hayride; Dude Martin.
8:30—TV Jackpot.
9:00—On Trial: Topic: "Should Congress Enact a Veterans' Pension?"

Hoffman Hayride
First Television Listing
May 11, 1949
San Francisco Chronicle

about the "pioneering period" of television in the Bay area in early 1949. KPIX was first on the air, owned by Associated Broadcasters, who also owned radio station KSFO. It was broadcasting via a transmitter atop the Mark Hopkins hotel on channel 5. KGO-TV, owned and operated by the American Broadcasting Company, was set to be next but equipment delivery issues delayed its debut on the air.

Television was a not the 24 hour a day seven day a week operation it later became. KGO-TV first went on the air in February 1949 with a test pattern but a broadcasting schedule was not expected until May or June. KGO-TV went on the air on May 5, 1949. On May 11, KGO's broadcast day began at 7:00 p.m. with a program emceed by Neil Hamilton. The Hollywood Screen Test. At 8:00 p.m. it was the Hoffman Hayride and a 8:30 p.m. it was TV Jackpot. To end the day, at 9:00 p.m. was a program On Trial: Should Congress Enact A Veteran's Pension?

In the weeks prior to its on-air debut, KGO-TV ran an ad letting readers and owners of television sets in the Bay area know what to expect when it went on the air. KGO would air its test pattern from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily so viewers could adjust their sets to enable good reception of Channel 7. Its 508 foot tall antenna was atop Sutro Mountain. After its opening night on May

5, the station was on the air from Tuesday through Saturday with a regular schedule of programs. The station billed itself as "your new way to look at life."

The first day's broadcast schedule was short. First to air was a brief 15 minute dedication ceremony, followed by a couple of other shows. The end of the first day was a broadcast of a baseball game between San Francisco and Oakland.

The first TV listing showing the Hoffman Hayride appeared in the May 11, 1949 *San Francisco Chronicle*. There were only four shows on KGO-TV's schedule that day. Its broadcast day started at 7:30 p.m. and ended after a 9:00 p.m. program. KPIX-TV programmed a 15-minute Supper Club show hosted by Perry Como, followed by a baseball game between San Francisco and Sacramento.

Bob Franklin's Radio and Television News column that seemed to always have the header "Advertisement" above it, wrote a humorous take on the early development of human ancestors in his May 11, 1949 column found in the *San Francisco Chronicle.* He reported on the first broadcast of Hoffman Hayride, writing

> "About a million years ago, more or less, our ancestors discovered "thinking "and great changes were brought about in caves all over the land . . . fire became a popular item to have around, clothing became more fashionable and, finally, someone dreamed up the wheel and really set things rolling. The results of all these years of thought are too numerous to mention—even a listing of the different types of can openers would fill the whole page—so today I'd just like to pass along some thoughts people have had recently concerning television programs.

> First there is a lady who knows about birds. Furthermore, she thinks she looks like one. For television she'd be glad to dress up in feathers and imitate birdcalls.Then there's the gentleman who wants to prove, on television, how strong he is. If plans had gone through, you could relax in your living room and watch him get konked on the head with a sledgehammer. Finally, there's one young man who states he is a genius. He claims he can cure all the world's ills if he can just talk to people on television every night.
>
> I didn't want these program brainstorms to go unsung. But I do want to assure you these aren't exactly what you can expect on KGO-TV Tuesday through Saturday—a lot of other people have had ideas along more normal lines.Take tonight for instance: On KGO-TV you'll see "Hollywood Screen Test" at 7:30pm with Neil Hamilton as emcee . . ."Hoffman Hayride" at 8 with Dude Martin and his Roundup Gang . . . "TV Jackpot" at 8:30 . . . and at 9 "On Trial" will review the question "Should Congress Enact a Veterans' Pension?"

Shortly after it went on the air, staff at KGO-TV did an "extensive check," most likely by phone or in-person interviews to determine how many tuned in to KGO-TV. George Voight reported in his Radio column for the *San Francisco Chronicle* that may have been an introduction into the "power of TV." One phone call was answered by a young boy when KGO called. He admitted he was watching KGO but begged them not to tell his parents because he was supposed to be in bed.

Occasionally, the local newspapers gave a glimpse of some of the people who were part of Dude Martin's Round-Up Gang. One

was a local disc jockey, E. (Elton) Western McGee, who hosted a 6:30 a.m. daily radio program over station KVSM. He was known as the Harmonica King of California. A 1949 article mentioned he had been a part of Dude's group for 14 years and had been on Bay Area radio from the early 1930s. He spoke to him being the master of ceremonies to announce the four contestants for queen at the San Leandro Fourth of July celebration.

In late June, 1949, there is a review of a couple of western television shows, The Hoffman Hayride and Club TV, whose cast included Rusty, George and Ozark Red. The writer reported that on Dude Martin's show"He and his "gang" get in front of the cameras with their instruments and cowboy uniforms and sing pretty good Western music and make jokes that are often funny, in a bucolic sort of way."

The show aired over local television station KGO-TV, but was broadcast live from a variety of facilities that usually sold Hoffman Televisions.

On August 10, 1949, the show originated on opening night for the San Mateo County Fiesta. The sponsor was Hoffman, promoting its "Easy-Vision Television." Tickets to the show were free and were obtained at Hoffman distributors. Some of the ads seen were for Blights of San Carlos, Bain Furniture in Millbrae, and Coronet Appliance Co. in San Bruno.

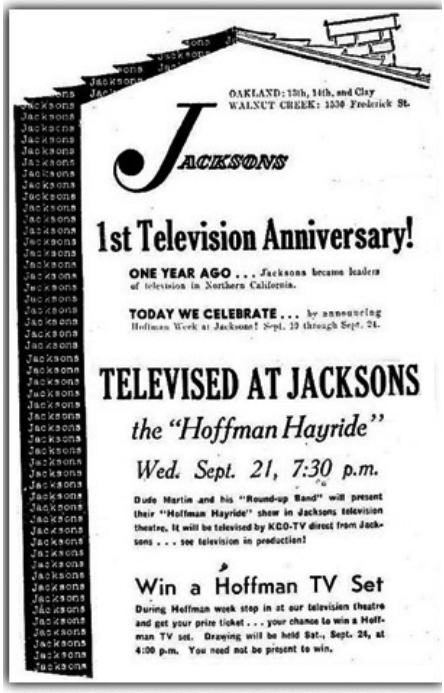
On Wednesday, September 21, 1949, one such show was to be at the Jacksons television theatre. The company was a Hoffman distributor and had gotten into the TV market in 1948. They were promoting the Hoffman brand for a week from September 19 through September 24. The store had only been in business for a year and this show was to celebrate their first anniversary. Their ad told readers "see television in production." Another gimmick was a chance to obtain a ticket for a chance to win a Hoffman TV set at a drawing to be held on September 24.

In October, the Hoffman Hayride program was to air from a newly remodeled and expanded Macy's Department Store in downtown San Francisco. Their broadcast originated from the fifth floor music center of the store. As an added note, Harpo Marx and Marion Hutton were to appear that night as well.

In late October, 1949, the Hoffman Hayride was brought back to the San Mateo County Fiesta Auditorium "by popular demand." Again, admission was free and the ad touted various Hoffman distributors such as Tecco in San Mateo, Torney & Bush Co. in San Carlos, Blight's Appliances in San Carlos, Smith's Appliance in San Mateo, Wisnom appliances in San Mateo and Lane & Onyon in Burlingame.

On November 16, 1949, the show was going to be broadcast from the Berkeley High School Little Theatre and sponsored by "The Electrical Living Shop" on Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley, California. They were advertising Hoffman's new 19 inch television model with a "direct view picture" for only $599. The show was front page news for the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* on November 10, 1949, including a large three-column width picture of Dude Martin and his group.

The front page article mentioned that equipment valued at $230,000--including cameras, trucks, lighting, hundreds of feet of cable, fan-shaped antenna--were going



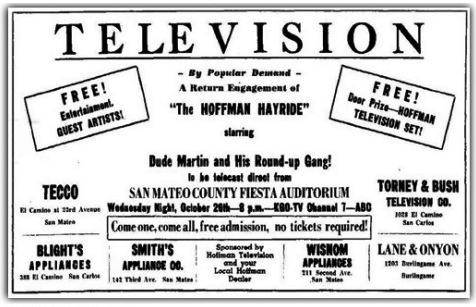
Ad for Hoffman Hayride Broadcast
Berkeley Daily Gazette
September 19, 1949

to be setup for the show. Dude's entire 10-member group was to be there along with the make-up artists, technicians and spotlight crews. It was to be Berkeley's first staged television show.

The doors were to open at 7:15 p.m. and close at 7:30 p.m. The audience would not only see the full half-hour show, but a 25-minute 'warm-up' as a prelude.

Berkeley considered Dude a hometown star since he and his wife Peggy were graduates of Berkeley High School. The show was "live"; it was "airwaved" to San Francisco and immediately broadcast over the air. In a report of the event, the local paper reported that the station had three $12,000 cameras to broadcast the live show hosted by Dude Martin. It was the first "live" broadcast originating in Berkeley other than local University of California football games. The local Berkeley newspaper included a three-column wide photo of the broadcast on its front page on November 17, 1949.

Dude was quite popular and often did appearances at local stores, even promoting the premier of another station in town. One occasion was in November, 1949, where he was to be at the local Land Onyon store in Burlingame for an hour. Featured television demonstrations and then the inaugural broadcast by KRON-TV was aired.


TELEVISION

– By Popular Demand –
A Return Engagement of
"The HOFFMAN HAYRIDE"
starring

FREE! Entertainment, GUEST ARTISTS!

FREE! Door Prize—HOFFMAN TELEVISION SET!

Dude Martin and His Round-up Gang!
to be telecast direct from
SAN MATEO COUNTY FIESTA AUDITORIUM
Wednesday Night, October 26th—8 p.m.—KGO-TV Channel 7—ABC

TECCO
El Camino at 22nd Avenue
San Mateo

TORNEY & BUSH TELEVISION CO.
1028 El Camino
San Carlos

Come one, come all, free admission, no tickets required!

BLIGHT'S APPLIANCES
208 El Camino San Carlos

SMITH'S APPLIANCE CO.
142 Third Ave. San Mateo

Sponsored by Hollman Television and your Local Hollman Dealer

WISHOM APPLIANCES
211 Second Ave.
San Mateo

LANE & ONYON
1205 Burlingame Ave.
Burlingame

Hoffman Hayride
Newspaper Ad
Live Broadcast
From San Mateo County Fiesta Auditorium
San Mateo Times
October 21, 1949


Television camera men from station KGO-TV adjust two of the three $12,000 cameras as Dude Martin explains to an enthusiastic audience at the Berkeley High School Little Theater, how his Western-style music show, "Hoffman Hayride," is transmitted from the theater to the television screens at home. The occasion last night marked the first time a "live" television program, other than University of California grid clashes, has originated in Berkeley. —Gazette Photo

Hoffman Hayride
Hosted by Dude Martin
Live Broadcast - KGO-TV
Berkeley High School Little Theater
Berkeley Daily Gazette
November 17, 1949

get your free tickets at

Macy's

San Francisco

for the

live television broadcast,

"Hoffman Hayride"

featuring

Dude Martin

and his Hoffman Hayride gang

in person on

KGO-TV

Wednesday, 8:00 to 8:30 p. m.

sponsored by

Hoffman Radio & Television Dealers

Pick up your tickets for The Hoffman Hayride at the sales desk in Macy's Music Center.

Macy's music center, fifth floor

Hoffman Hayride
Newspaper Ad
Live Broadcast
Macy's Grand Opening
San Francisco Chronicle
June 27, 1949

Get Your

FREE TICKETS

at

STERLING

for the

HOFFMAN HAYRIDE

TV-BROADCAST

Oakland Auditorium
Wed. Evening, October 19th

STERLING
Bunster & Saxe
1749 BROADWAY 1800 TELEGRAPH

Hoffman Hayride
Newspaper Ad
Live Broadcast
Oakland Auditorium
Oakland Tribune
October 18, 1949

The show continued to accumulate a list of "firsts" in the Bay Area. The show was to be broadcast on November 30, 1949, from the Hayward Union High School auditorium at 8 p.m. The sponsors of the show were the Hayward area Chamber of Commerce, headed by Roger Anderson. Tickets were to be sold at Lustig's, Hauschildt's, Alcalde Radio, B-B Home Furnishing and Ashland furniture stores. Guesting on the show was comedian Hi

Pockets. Also appearing were Clara and Clyde Sandoval, who had won the Television Talent search contest in conjunction with Hayward's "first" Farm, Home and Industry show. One of the winners in the preliminary talent contests won a Hoffman radio.

Rusty Draper
From "Hoffman Hayride" Kinescope
Circa 1949
Screen Shot from Youtube Video

In late 1949 or early 1950, *Country Song Roundup* let readers know of a new female singer that Dude had added to his troupe. The Roundup Gang was performing in San Jose and Sue Thompson was standing in front of the band stand and then found herself invited to sing with the band. The crowd enjoyed her singing style and made her sing a few more tunes. Dude hired her and she began to tour with the band and eventually received a recording contract with Mercury Records.

Rusty Draper
Promotional Photo
Mercury Records
From the Hillbilly-Music.com Collection

In February, 1950, the show originated from the San Francisco Merchandise Mart as part of the entertainment for the Western Radio-Television Trade Dinner. The show was to feature Hi-Pockets, Peggy (Dude's wife), Red Gillham and a new discovery, Sue Thompson.

May 3, 1950, Bob Franklin told readers that the Hoffman Hayride was to air program number 52 and celebrate its first year anniversary. The popular show won an Emmy for best local live entertainment show.

Personal Appearance Ad
San Mateo Times
October 22, 1949

Later in the month, Mr. Franklin reported that show number 55 on May 24, 1950, was to originate from the Scottish Rite auditorium in San Francisco as part of the World Trade Week and World Trade Fair going on. That show featured some new talent, Pat Shirley and Beverly Tobey along with "the fast man on the guitar" Rusty Draper.

Rusty Draper later had a recording career, even hosting network television shows, but he is associated with the only known video or kinescope we have seen of the Hoffman Hayride that one can find on YouTube. The clip is said to be from 1949 when the show was on KGO-TV. The video at the time this was written can be found at: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgkgbccIoHE**

In late June, 1950, Bob Franklin reported in his "Show Time" column that the Hoffman Hayride set at San Francisco's Radio City was being reconfigured by the show's director, Bill Hollenbeck. The new design put the audience on the stage and he moved the show's production to the lower level to give the cameras greater flexibility and provide some extra "elbow room" for Dude and the gang.

In early September, 1950, the show originated from the Palace Hotel's Gold Ballroom over KGO-TV as part of the entertainment for the Pacific Transportation Association's meeting. A few weeks later, Bob Franklin told readers the show was to originate from the "Electrical Wonderland Exposition" at the Civic Auditorium. It was said it would provide audiences with a behind the scenes look at what goes on for a television show production.

The show often featured young talent in the Bay Area. One act was the Tobey Sisters who, for a time, were part of Dude Martin's entertainment group on the Hayride show. They were invited to become part of the group that Bob Hope took to Korea, Japan and the Aleutian Islands to entertain United States military forces. Others in the group were Jane Russel, Gloria De Haven, Marilyn Maxwell, Les Brown and his orchestra.

Later in 1950, Terrence O'Flaherty wrote that the three sisters performed together on the Hoffman Hayride. On October 10, 1950, they were to open a six week engagement at Bimbo's, a night club that also featured a "young lady who swims under water in a gold fish bowl." However, after two weeks of performing at Bimbo's, the California State Board of Equalization decided they were too young to work in saloons because one of the trio was only 18 years old. That caused concern but their manager, Sam Rosey came up with an idea. He changed their name to the Taylor Maids and told them they were on the Bob Hope tour.

In January, 1951, Dude was looking for an addition to the show. Bob Franklin's "Show Time" column noted that the show on January 24 would feature the Newcomb Brothers, Jesse and James, who played some unusual instruments: musical saws, musical bottles and a musical shotgun.

One of the columnists in the San Francisco Chronicle, Bob Foster, started one column defending his favorable reviews of Dude Martin on the Hoffman Hayride show on KGO-TV. He said, "He has the one consistently good entertainment programs on San Francisco television and he has contributed more to the industry than all the others combined. He has not only proved that San Francisco can present top television shows but also has proved, what we have known for some time, that the Bay area has lots of top talent if somebody will only look for it."

Mr. Foster went on to mention some of the local talent seen on the show up to that point, Sue Thompson, the Taylor Maids, Rusty Draper and the 14-year old identical twins, the Miller Sisters.

Dude continued to find ways to seek out and promote local talent on the show. Bob Franklin wrote in his column (which we find oddly labelled as "Advertisement") mentions that in April 1951, that Dude was looking for "a young feller who's a ballad-type singer and who wouldn't mind such things as fame, money and spendin' a lot of time lookin' in Sue Thompson's pretty little eyes." The show came up with a gimmick called a "sing down." The idea was to have to gentlemen do a song each week on the show then let the viewing audience send in their votes by post card. The final judging would be done by Bill Hollenbeck, the show's producer and director, a guest critic and Dude himself.

In his May 21, 1951 column "Radio and TV" in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Terrence O'Flaherty told readers that the winner was Dick Ewart, a 23-year old singer from Berkeley. He

won the contest by a wide margin, 30-1. The nine week contest was shortened to five weeks because of the over whelming response.

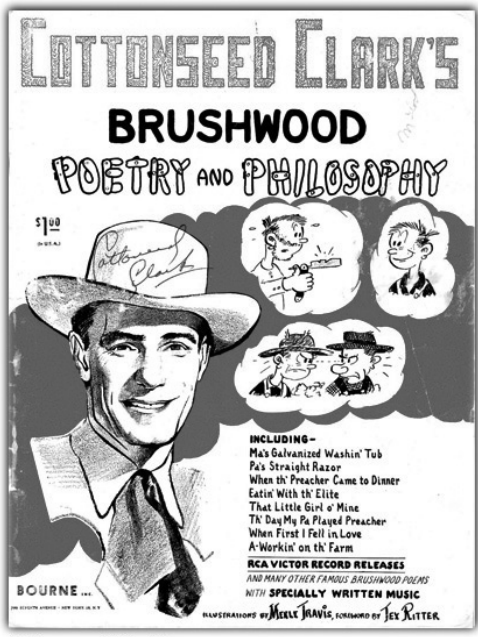
In late June, 1951, readers of the local newspapers were informed that after the show at the end of June, it was time for Dude to take a rest, a long six week or so vacation. He said he wanted to see places he had not been able to because of his radio and television efforts; it was reported that the show would return in August or September 1951.

The show may not have returned with Dude because newspaper articles about the show began to mention Cottonseed Clark as a host. The *Hayward Daily Review* ran an ad for an appearance at the Rollerhaven (formerly the Garden of Allah, which has its own history behind it) hosted by Cottonseed Clark's Down Home Jamboree and appearing would be Dude Martin and Sue Thompson. Ed Tate and his Down Home Gang would provide the musical backing and it featured Barney Tucker and "His 12 Golden Voices." A few days later, Cottonseed hosted Tex Ritter at the same venue.

We are not able to definitely determine when the show hosted by Dude Martin ended, but we read the obituary for Harry (Ted) Johnson who died in May 2011 that indicated the show was on for perhaps three years. Ted was Dude Martin's bandleader, accordion player and musical arranger. Dude Martin's oral history indicated he was a part of the show for two years.

Country Song Roundup reported on events and happenings in 1952 in their February 1953 issue. They reported that in June of 1952, Dude Martin had reorganized his band with Sue Thompson as a co-star and was part of a weekly television show in Hollywood. He was quite the showman. One article mentioned that Dude had an extensive wardrobe, valued at a reported $15,000 (in 1954) and included 30 shirts, 25 pairs of "riding breeches," 18 pairs of handmade boots and 27 Stetson hats.

Hoffman Hayride returned in 1953 but was hosted by Cottonseed Clark and aired over KPIX-TV. Bob Foster wrote about the return of the show in an August 8, 1953 article in the *San Mateo Times* and stated the new version was a 30-minute show. Cottonseed was well known in the area and working at radio station KVSM in San Mateo.



Cottonseed Clark's Brushwood Poetry and Philosophy 1950 Bourne, Inc. Illustrations by Merle Travis Foreword by Tex Ritter

From Hillbilly-Music.com Collection

In October, 1953, the local newspaper informed readers of discussions the cast had at a "post mortem" meeting and saw what the television audience saw. On October 12, 1953, the cast visited the KPIX-TV studios to view their efforts and Cottonseed Clark stated, "Gad, I'm ugly. I just didn't realize how ugly I am." After the session was over, Cottonseed was the subject of what was termed a delicate discussion. It was his "costumes" (the writer noted that western stars do not wear clothes, they wear costumes) that were causing angst. His costumes were all white which did not work well with the lighting for the show. In response, Cottonseed stated, "You know I must have $3,000 worth of outfits and they're all white. Snow white." They tried to get him to wear a pale pink costume for the next show.

That first show included such well-known names as Eddie Dean and Carolina Cotton from Hollywood along with talented

actor-singer Dusty Dale. The show also featured a young female singer, of Marilyn Orlando.

Mr. Foster stated that Cottonseed "made the new Hoffman Hayride a must" but did not mince his criticisms. Mr. Foster pointed out "weak spots" in the show, one of which Big Jim DeNoon, a talented singer who led the show's band. Foster said the "orchestra" was "not the best group of western musicians" and questioned whether Big Jim could carry the show with its fast cues and split second changes. He noted that "several of his instrumentalists put on good performances ... for dance halls ... but were sloppy on their solo renditions and [were] obviously doing a great deal of faking (recorded music?) and quite noticeable to the musicians and audience. Mr. Foster indicated that the producer of the show, Charlotte Morris, was "okeh" in the direction but it was presented in an uninspired manner. Foster strongly hinted to Cottonseed that those weaknesses needed to be fixed quickly. Big Jim DeNoon may have had the last laugh because he won a local Emmy as best musical director for the Hoffman Hayride show on KPIX-TV and KOVR-TV in February 1955.

Foster mentioned that he was impressed by ten-year old Marilyn Orlando. He said she "just drips showmanship, has a fine voice and will go a long, long way in show business." He said her rendition of *"*Johnny Is The Boy For Me*"* reminded him of the early singing of Sue Thompson and he wanted to see more of her on the show in the future.

Cottonseed later moved to radio station KEEN (1370 on the AM dial) in San Jose, California.

Later in 1953, Mr. Foster wrote of his impressions of Patti Prichard, who appeared on the show and did a rendition of *"Riccochet"* that he said was the best he had heard of that tune, which was a hit by Teresa Brewer at the time. Patti also did the tune on the local Les Malloy show and Foster noted that he had

first noticed Patti four years previously on the "Jay Grill Show." About a month later, he complimented the duet numbers that Eddie Dean and Patti Prichard did. Mr. Foster seemed to be trying to take credit for that duo by stating he had suggested the sing together.

Mr. Foster wrote in a feature article commemorating the first anniversary of the new version of the Hoffman Hayride that "there is little question that appearing on the Hoffman Hayride has helped Patti Prichard become San Francisco's top female television star."

The show impacted a few careers. Dusty Dale won a local TV Emmy award for makeup and was doing stints at a night club in Oakland with a limited following. Appearing on the Hayride show made him a much sought after character actor and singer.

Bill Carter joined the United States Air Force in 1950 and was transferred to the Bay area in 1952 where he met Cottonseed Clark and Big Jim DeNoon. When he was discharged in September 1953, Carter signed a recording contract with Four Star records and did a few guest appearances on the show. He was also appearing at the local Cotton's Club in Belmont, California.

Johnny Guess, Cottonseed Clark and Marilyn Orlando
Hoffman Hayride
Hillbilly & Western Hoedown
April 1954

From the Hillbilly-Music.com Collection

In keeping with the efforts to give young Bay area talent exposure, eleven year-old Johnny Guess auditioned for Cottonseed in January, 1954. His first personal appearance came when he

was three and a half years old on radio station KSUE in Susanville, California. He was a featured part of the Johnnie Arizona and his Blue Prairie Boys and Girls show that appeared each Saturday night in Chico, California. Johnny had his own fan club.

While local coverage seems to have been sparse, mention was made of the KPIX show in a Nashville publication, *Pickin' and Singin' News* in June, 1954. The cast of the show listed were Cottonseed Clark, Big Jim DeNoon, Patty Pritchard, Marilyn Orlando, Johnny Guess and Bill Carter.

Mr. Foster stated that Nat Sinclair was the producer and Forrester Mashbier the director of the show. He also reported that Cottonseed had signed a 104-week contract with Hoffman Television, so the show would be on television another two years.

In September, 1954, a news item in the Santa Clara County Fair stated the show had more than 6,000 in the fairgrounds grandstand. The show was aired on KOVR for a half-hour each week. Marilyn Orlando won a talent context at the fair that got her entertainment career on the upswing. The reporter noted that Russ Petit made sure the young lady received a bouquet of flowers to mark her return, now as a featured star of the Hoffman Hayride.

That same night was a sad occasion for one of the show's other female singers, Patti Prichard, who had her own show that aired on Friday nights at 6 p.m., which made it impossible for her to do the show in Stockton with the rest of the Hayride gang. That night at the fair was her last appearance as a cast member of the Hoffman Hayride and Patti received a police escort from San Francisco when she left her show on KPIX at 6:15 p.m. and "she hung on for dear life" as the escort made its way to the Santa Clara fairgrounds in just under an hour.

The Hoffman Hayride hosted by Cottonseed Clark continued perhaps until late 1954 but did not receive the same kind of newspaper coverage that Dude's show received.

H. Leslie Hoffman and the Hoffman Electronics Corporation took another step forward in the television industry in September, 1954 when the FCC approved the first new television station in the Bay area in five years and allocated it to Mount Diablo Television, owned by Hoffman. The antenna was to be on Mt. Diablo, a peak 3,849 feet above sea level and that location would enable it to cover 27 Northern California counties. It could reach as far north as Marysville and Chico and as far south as Fresno and Monterey. Thus, the Hoffman Hayride show would begin to air on KOVR-TV.

The show saw less press coverage but one mention was found in the *San Mateo Times* in November, 1954 where it stated that there was to be a "live" two hour show of the Hoffman Hayride featuring Cottonseed, Big Jim DeNoon, Bobby Rice and Dusty Dale. It would also feature Wrestling, a staple of early television.

A small blurb in the *Hayward Daily Review* stated that Eddie Kirk, who had previously led the band at the Town Hall Party show in Compton, California, was spinning records over KVSM in San Mateo.

In 1955, the show received a couple of local Emmy awards. Dusty Dale repeated as a winner for makeup and Big Jim DeNoon (despite the criticism of Mr. Foster) won as best musical performer.

In March 1955, readers were told that the Hoffman Hayride would return to KOVR on April 2. However Cottonseed Clark or Big Jim DeNoon would not be a part of the show nor would any of the other regulars. The new version of the show would feature Bob Kennedy and "will be less expensive than the other Hoffman Hayrides" The reporter noted that from what he had seen, "it won't hold a candle to either Dude Martin or Cottonseed Clark's versions." That brought the question of the reported two year contract that Cottonseed had signed for the show but Bob Foster told readers in July, 1955, that Cottonseed along with Patty

Full Page Newspaper Ad
Hoffman Easy-Vision Television
The Fresno Bee
February 1, 1953

Pritchard, Marilyn Orlando, Johnny Guess, Eddie Kirk and Arvade Miller would return to the Hoffman Hayride over KOVR-TV for an hour show.

In December, 1955, there are hints why Cottonseed returned. The *San Mateo Times* reported that KOVR-TV "was suffering from the lack of sponsors, the lack of a network affiliation and from a lack of good programs. H. Leslie Hoffman brought in Terry Lee from Texas and by the end of the year, he was promoted to president of the company, Television Diablo.

Newspaper coverage was sparse after that. We later learned that the Gannett Company purchased KOVR-TV from Television Diablo (H. Leslie Hoffman was the principal owner). One newspaper article reporting the sale indicated that the station, airing on channel 13, had a maximum power transmitter of 326,000 watts atop Butte Mountain, near Jackson in Amador County. At that time, it was reported that it served 450,000 families and a population of 1,500,000.

Television Development and Hoffman Radio Corporation / Hoffman Electronics Corporation

One may wonder how big the television market was in those early days. A publication that originated in Washington, DC, *Television Digest* and *FM Reports* provide some insight in its January 1949 issue. It stated that the best "census of TV" was attributed to NBC Research's monthly report, which reported the number of television stations operating, television sets installed and the number of families within a 40 mile service area of the urban area. The report made a distinction between Interconnected cities (mainly on the east coast and in the Midwest) and Non-Interconnected cities – mainly the western US area. Our focus is the western cities as this was Hoffman's target markets. New York and Chicago are shown for comparison purposes.

Area	No. of Stations	No. of Families	No. of TV Sets Installed
San Francisco	1	825,000	1,500
Los Angeles	4	1,372,000	60,700
Albuquerque	1	22,000	200
Seattle	1	307,000	1,500
San Diego	0	113,000	200
New York	6	3,597,000	370,000
Chicago	4	1,438,000	48,000
Source: Television Digest and FM Reports, January 1949			

The Hoffman Radio Corporation (as it was known then) reported prices in March, 1949 of their new models. A new 10-inch set would be $299.50; a 12-inch set would be $385; and a 16-inch set $595. Stands on casters would cost extra.

In April 1949, we get an indication of the growth of television and its impact on Hoffman sales. Hoffman reported that their first quarter earnings were up 124% in the first quarter of 1949 compared to the same period in 1948 – about $1,198,000 versus $533,000. Hoffman did not start television production until the third quarter of 1948. In July 1949, *Television Digest* and *FM Reports* wrote that Hoffman was "reporting accelerated TV set sales in West Coast TV areas in which it markets (Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and Seattle)."

By August, 1949, San Francisco had a third station, KRON-TV and Los Angeles had its seventh. Hoffman's competitor on the west coast was Packard-Bell. During that same month, Hoffman announced it was extending distributorships of its products to Texas and other southeastern markets.

With the addition of the seventh station in Los Angeles, KECA-TV, we see how live sports programming began to play a role in garnering interest in the new medium. One of KECA's first

broadcasts was a live broadcast of a night time college football game between UCLA and Oregon State and was sponsored by Hoffman. This seemed to start a trend for Hoffman. In October, *Television Digest* and *FM Reports* wrote that Hoffman was said to have 8 to 25% of the TV set market in the 11 western states. It was spending $200,000 of TV time in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Houston and Fort Worth, much of it on football broadcasts and similar amounts in other media.

Television Digest and *FM Reports* published some interesting results from a Woodbury College survey of the TV viewing habits of 2,000 families in Los Angeles.

- 91% listened less to radio
- 68% decreased movie attendance
- 56% read fewer books
- 43% read fewer magazines
- 15% read fewer newspapers

The kinds of programs favored by those in the survey were sports, Milton Berle and movies, but football was well in the lead and the survey said that even back then, 34% would pay for "championship boxing match.

Another interesting aspect was the market share of TV set manufacturers:

- 16% - RCA
- 15% - Philco
- 13% - Admiral
- 9% - Hoffman
- 7% - Packard-Bell
- 6% - GE
- 34% - others

Even with the results of that survey and the seeming interest in the new medium, Hoffman reported that demand was such in "non-TV and fringe areas" in the Western markets that it had to resume the manufacture of radio sets.

Negative impacts in the growing television industry occurred in late 1949. Some western colleges were bannied the broadcast of their football games because they thought was that broadcasting the games caused ticket sales to decrease. H. Leslie Hoffman was named to lead a committee of television manufacturers that included the heads of DuMont, GE, and RCA to work out a way to keep colleges happy.

That same November issue gave us another look into the size of the television market at end of the third quarter of 1949. This time, *Television Digest* and *FM Reports* provided third quarter shipments by the manufacturers as well as a cumulative total since January 1, 1947. The list is primarily to show the west coast figures since it was Hoffman's target market. Other cities at the bottom of the listing are for comparative purposes.

TV Service Area	**3rd Quarter 1949**	**Cumulative Shipments Since 1/1/47**
San Francisco	4,785	24,979
Los Angeles	5,962	190,294
Portland	148	707
Seattle	1,553	8,713
Albuquerque	119	436
Phoenix	158	180
San Antonio	293	380
Houston	1,722	6,087
New York	80,055	505,703

Chicago	52,906	209,600
Nashville	141	254
Source: Television Digest and FM Reports, November 1949		

Hoffman moves into the Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma markets at the end of 1949. One of their first distributors in that market was the Jenkins Music Co. in Kansas City.

Demand for televisions spurred Hoffman Radio Corporation to add 20,000 square feet of space for Plant No. 3 by purchasing a structure adjacent to the plant's property. Later in 1950,*Television Digest* and *FM Reports* reported that Hoffman had added a 7th plant with 17,000 square feet and two buildings at 335 S. Pasadena Avenue in Pasadena, California. It was reported that the company then had 260,000 square feet. Its other six plants were in Los Angeles.

The earnings report for 1949 for Hoffman Radio Corporation showed sales jumping 134% from 1948 volume - $11,987,650 vs $5,112,889 and the gain was attributed to TV demand.

There was a bit of a rivalry between Hoffman and the Packard-Bell company. It seems that VP Robert S. Bell felt they were the largest radio producer in the west with better facilities than any other manufacturer west of Chicago. He was claiming they were cranking out 8,000 TV sets a month. But then, Hoffman was reporting that it was producing at a rate of 180,000 sets annually and expected to even reach 200,000 by end of 1950. Mr. Hoffman addressed a gathering of New York Society of Security Analysts, stating his company would only make 180,000 sets in 1950, but could produce 300,000 as there was a scarcity of parts; radios were in shorter supply than TVs and the company has had to air freight parts to its Los Angeles plant in the past few months.

It seems the leader of the household was the focus of attention in marketing television. Hoffman Radio was buying advertising on wrestling shows on stations KECA-TV and KTLA-TV in Los Angeles. It was termed "good sales insurance for second and third quarter sales."

What was interesting was that many manufacturers would shut down for a couple of weeks in the summer for vacations. Hoffman and its competitors such as Admiral, Emerson, GE, Magnavox, Philco, RCA, Westinghouse, and Zenith – were reporting plant shutdowns in the first two weeks of July 1950 for vacations.

By July of 1950, Hoffman Radio Corporation had worked out an agreement with several west coast colleges to sponsor 30 home football games of USC, UCLA, UC, Stanford and Washington. The deal included guaranteeing minimum gates and could cost about $350,000 while the previous year cost was only $80,000 for USC and UCLA games. Then came the "Hoffman Plan" where the company started a "Gridiron Club" to sell college football tickets through its TV dealers. Similarly, it was reported that the Admiral company made a deal to guarantee a minimum gate in exchange for sponsoring broadcasts for the NFL team, Los Angeles Rams. The end of 1950 results of this marketing and broadcasting effort showed that for 4 of 5 teams, they had one of their best seasons. Television Digest and FM Reports indicated that 10% of the ticket sales came through schemes such as the "Gridiron Club". USC had a bad season and reported 5% less in the way gate receipts from the previous year.

The growth of TV also created a problem in households early on. H. L. Hoffman related a tidbit he had heard from his sales teams. "When Dad wants to see the wrestling bouts, the kids want to see "The Lucky Pup" or Mother wants to see the Hollywood show, who do you, think wins? Why, the kids, of course!" He

indicated they were seeing a trend where a second TV set was added to accommodate this new demand.

Mr. Hoffman's interest went beyond electronics and a stated desire to diversify its business. In late 1950, the Hoffman Radio Corporation made a bid of $10,000,000 for the Mutual Don Lee Broadcasting System. This arose due to the death of Tommy Lee. The will of Mr. Lee was contentious as he left everything to an uncle by marriage, but an aunt and two adopted daughters contested the will. However, the First National Bank of Akron, Ohio successfully bid $12,300,000 for the network and bought it as an investment for the retirement plans for General Tire and Rubber company employees as it acts as a trustee. The Columbia Broadcasting System joined with the bank on the deal, but its primary interest was in the Don Lee station, KTSL and would give them an outlet in Los Angeles.

Hoffman Radio Corporation

The news of the origins of the Hoffman Radio Corporation was reported in a small six line newspaper article in The Los Angeles Times on November 20, 1943. H. L. Hoffman was the president of the new Hoffman Radio Corporation after completing the merger of the Mission Bell Radio Manufacturing Company and the Mitchell-Hughes Corporation. Mr. Hoffman indicated in one interview, "I entered the radio business on a bad debt. When I tried to collect the debt I wound up in the business. That was three days before Pearl Harbor, and we had a 5,000 square foot plant. The original investment was $10,000. By June of 1950, the company had over 250,000 square feet of floor space and employed 1,500.

When the military's need for manufacturers to support the World War II effort, Mr. Hoffman was able to convince the government to allow his company to do electronics manufacturing. He wanted to show that the west coast could be a hub of manufacturing. In

November of 1949, the company was awarded the Army-Navy E Flag for excellent war production. It was to be awarded at the company's No. 3 plant at 3751 S. Hill Street in Los Angeles.

One can see the initial vision that Hoffman had for his company as it was something used in their newspaper advertising. Here's an example of the company's story and approach to its manufacturing: *"*The Hoffman Idea…and what it means to you. 11 years ago in Los Angeles, a handful of men led by H. Leslie Hoffman started a company important today to television buyers. They saw a need for a major western producer of radio-phonograph combinations built for the West. Behind these products—and the Hoffman television of the future—was an idea.

Here, in the rough, was The Hoffman Idea:

…to build a quality instrument …to engineer into it the extra performance needed to meet the vast distances and rugged terrain of the West …to house it in a distinctive cabinetry, crafted to find furniture standards…to price it as low as we could without lowering quality.

Then, days later, came Pearl Harbor. Instead of entertainment, military electronics became our business. Yet one thing didn't change. The Hoffman Idea of quality—translated into complex wartime electronic equipment—stayed alive and kept growing. It was later reflected in the Army-Navy "E" Award presented to the Hoffman Company,"

Mr. Hoffman spoke to the growth of the manufacturing sector on the west coast that jump started during the World War II efforts and continued. By 1953, the west coast electronics industry had become a $600,000,000 a year business and was then twice as large as the nation's prewar radio industry. He was quoted:

"Before the war, West Coast manufacturers did 3% of the national electronics business. Now they do about 30%. As far as

television is concerned, West Coast production is not earmarked for local consumption alone but is produced with the nationwide market in mind."

He indicated that the electronics industry in the Pacific area was now incorporating what it learned during the war time efforts into their business such as atomic and guided missile research and other electronics.

H. Leslie Hoffman and his Hoffman Radio Corporation which became the Hoffman Electronics Corporation took advantage of what he learned from sponsoring Spade Cooley in Los Angeles and Dude Martin in San Francisco to help grow the market for television. Doing the research with the resources the internet now provides was quite an eye opening experience and led to going beyond documenting this local **Hoffman Hayride** show that we learned of that originated in the San Francisco area. His company would often sponsor a "live" show in western markets where television stations were beginning to sprout up. Here is a partial list as we deduce there are probably more instances of a **Hoffman Hayride** show that we do not have access to at this point.

- **Hoffman Hayride**
  KTLA-TV
  Los Angeles, CA
  Host: Spade Cooley
  Tickets for the show were given out at Hoffman dealers such as Walker's, Bullocks, Macy's. One notable remote broadcast was in April 1949 from the Naval Hospital in Long Beach, California. Part of the telecast was an amateur contest that featured patients and hospital staff doing the entertainment.

- **Hoffman Hayride**
  KFMB-TV (channel 8)
  San Diego, CA
  Went on the air on
  May 15, 1949
  Transmitter on
  Mt. Soledad On
  May 16, 1949, the
  Hoffman Hayride was
  rebroadcast by direct
  pickup from KTLA
  in Los Angeles. The
  broadcast included a
  greeting from KTLA
  GM, Klaus Landsberg.
  The distance between
  the two transmitters
  was 125 miles –
  KTLA was on Mt.
  Wilson and KFMB
  was on Mt. Soledad.
  Billboard reported that
  Bostick Western and
  his Country Cousins
  would host the show
  weekly on KFMB.

Hoffman Hayride
Hosted by Spade Cooley
KTLA (Channel 5)
Los Angeles, CA
Newspaper Ad
Los Angeles Times
March 14, 1949

- **Hoffman Hayride**
  WOAI-TV (channel 4)
  San Antonio, TX
  Went on the air on December 11, 1949 Hosted by
  Red River Dave Station was allowed to retain its call

letters when FCC indicated that radio stations west of Mississippi begin with letter “K”.

- **Hoffman Hayride**
  KPHO-TV (channel 5)
  Phoenix, AZ
  First mention of show seen in February 1951
  Test pattern went on the air each day at 1:00pm and sign-off was at 11:30pm. Show aired at 8:00pm for 30-minutes; Roller Derby and the Ken Murray show preceded its airing and the Vaughn Monroe show came on afterwards and Wrestling was featured as the last show of the day. A review of an old Country Song Roundup led to a tidbit that may indicate that Marty Robbins appeared on this show. Marty had put together a band and actually had his own show on KPHO-TV. A TV listing for March 12, 1951 indicated his show came on at 5:30pm. Country Song Roundup told readers the cast members of this show: Slim Forbes, Gene Herndon, Sheldon Gibbs, Bud Croy, Jeannie Lane, Art Hawkins, Foy Elliott, Brick Herndon, and Dale Noe. Sheldon led a group called the Arizona Ranch Boys that also appeared locally at the Willow Breeze Ballroom in Phoenix.

- **Hoffman Hayride**
  KOB-TV (channel 4)
  Albuquerque, NM
  Show first aired on March 11, 1950
  Hosted by Dick Bills and his Sandia Mountain Boys. The first airing was on a Saturday afternoon from 3:00 to 4:00pm. The remainder of the day’s programming was from 7:00pm to sign-off at 9:10pm.

- **Hoffman Hayride**
  KPTV-TV (channel 27)
  Portland, OR
  Station's first broadcast on September 20, 1952
  First commercial station on UHF frequency
  Show first aired on May 8, 1953
  Hosted by Taylor Morris and His Country Gentlemen.

H. Leslie Hoffman

Their home was at 1100 Avondale Road in Pasadena, California. In 1950, the Pasadena Area Girl Scout Council planned a tour of five households and their gardens. The Hoffman residence was one of them. It was described as"…set in a natural redwood grove and has a broad expanse of lawn which slopes to a swimming pool and brick terrace. This emphasizes deep perennial borders."

H. Leslie Hoffman
Press Photo
Entrance to Founder's Hall at University of Southern California
Annual Shareholder Meeting on May 8, 1961
Note: Panel of Hoffman Solar Cells powered battery of golf cart

From Hillbilly-Music.com Collection

The Hoffman's were involved in their community. In 1952, we read that the San Marino Guild of Huntington Memorial Hospital would hold its first regular meeting at the Hoffman home on Avondale Road.

He was known to lead the California state fund raising drive for the American Cancer Society. In 1954, he helped raise over $1.6 million and was selected to lead the drive again in 1955.

In September of 1954, the H. Leslie Hoffman and Elaine S. Hoffman Foundation was created. It appears the primary benefactor of the foundation was the University of Southern California, where contributions over $2.5 million were made. Two buildings were named after them – the H. Leslie Hoffman Hall in the school of business and the Elaine S. Hoffman Medical Research Center in the school of medicine. Their philanthropic work extended to their children. The Jane Hoffman Popovich and J. Kristoffer Popovich Hall were named in their honor in the USC Marshall School of Business. Later in June of 2015, Jane and her husband pledged $4,000,000 to create the Jane and Kris Popovich Chair in Cancer Research at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

We were able to obtain two oral history documents from the Country Music Hall of Fame of interviews of Dude Martin and another with Ted Johnson, who became Mr. Martin's music director. But the interviews did not really delve much into whether they knew they were part of the early development of television and its lasting impact that helped it grow. But Dude did relate that it was the most popular show in the area for two years and led to a move to Los Angeles.

Dwight Newton wrote an article in December of 1977 that outlines a bit of what early television was like in the San Francisco area. He noted that out of necessity, for the first two years, television in the Bay Area relied "…heavily on do-it-yourself entertainment." There was no microwave or cable connections to other television outlets. Shows that originated in New York would be broadcast on a delayed basis via kinescopes. Mr. Newton noted that his employer, the San Francisco Examiner newspaper assigned him to write a daily radio and television column. He noted that the

data he had indicated there were only 14,000 television sets in the area and many of them purchased as promotional gimmicks.

Indeed, prices of the new-fangled medium may have given customers pause – upwards to $500. Mr. Newton noted that consumers were also reluctant to buy due to "a preponderance of infantile programming that would bring to the new medium such snide sobriquets as "boob tube", "idiot box", and "chewing gum for the eyes". The "vast wasteland" epithet would come later."

Early television stations were seen to be a way to throw away money. Mr. Newton notes that a writer for the Associated Press stated, "The sooner you get on the air with a tv station the sooner you start to lose money." He noted that sponsors were aloof and initially distrustful of the new technology. But the early sponsors were the risk takers – the television set manufacturers. At that time it was RCA Victor, Admiral, Hoffman, Philco, Columbia, Westinghouse and Zenith.

Dwight said when he started his column in October of 1949, San Francisco had two television stars. Dude Martin hosting the **Hoffman Hayride** on KGO-TV (channel 7) and sponsored by Hoffman Television was one. The other was Ruby Hunter starring in the **Tell The Admiral** show sponsored by Admiral over KPIX-TV (channel 5).

He further commented on Dude Martin's uncanny ability to sell the audiences, radio or TV, to open their wallets and purchase sponsor products. For instance, the pitch for the Star Outfitting Company – "no money down, thirty days to make your first payment, six months in all to pay." The founder of the Hoffman Radio Corporation took advantage of Dude's salesmanship by sponsoring a show to promote the sale of their television sets.

Mr. Newton tells readers that it was not until September 15, 1950 that a microwave was setup to link San Francisco to Los Angeles. But it was a luxury for the initial television stations. The

half-hour rate at that time was $850 was hard to justify as there may have only been about 90,000 sets in the area at the time.

In those early days, costs were daunting for those broadcasting pioneers. Mr. Newton noted that ABC reported a loss of $877,000 in its first nine months. Then he states that the president of NBC, Joe McConnell told employees that *"*Due to tremendous expenses incurred in the infant tv industry, the traditional Christmas bonus will be omitted.*"*

One wonders what those early pioneers would think of the amount of money now generated by the medium they helped start.

The early development of television did not go unnoticed in television. It gave birth to "critics". One such person was Terrence O'Flaherty who wrote for the San Francisco Chronicle. We found a couple of articles he wrote towards the end of his journalistic career. He wrote one such article for the "TV Week" publication put out by the Chronicle when he brought back some of his memories of early days of television while attending the grand opening of the new studios for KGO-TV. In the interest of providing readers with details of those early days, we include his description of the early home of that station.

> "The first studios of KGO, from 1949 to 1954, were in the abandoned turreted mansion of Adolph Sutro in a eucalyptus grove on the mountain named after him. It was built in a style that might be called Hollywood Tudor with strong suggestions of Hansel and Gretel.
>
> The mansion's major cultural attraction was a petrified whale's penis embedded in plaster over the fireplace, an object that was to have a profound influence on the subject matter of the KGO-TV News Department. To the best of my knowledge no other television studio on the North American continent has such an appropriate talisman. Cry your eyes out, Hugh Hefner!"

He then noted in one of his last columns in April of 1986 that he was interviewed over the phone by a student from Yale about the effects of television on society. He wondered why he got called. He noted his reviewer told him, "My research shows that you have been covering television longer than any other critic on any major paper on earth." He told readers how he got the job.

"I had been plucked from the copyboy ranks, wet-eared, to cover the new medium because, frankly, no one else wanted to do it. The first day I asked myself if I should plunge through the doorway of this wonderful invention like a true believer or stand back and take a more casual look at its magic with as much humor as I could summon under the circumstances. … In those days television was a small window in a very large box. Through it we could see all the way to The Hoffman Hayride and Ruby Hunter's Magic Mirror Revue."

While doing the research for this essay, I stumbled across an old movie I saw many years ago while channel surfing – Network. You know the movie, where the main character Howard Beale immortalized the phrase, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore." When I found the movie, it was already half-way through the story. But there was a scene where William Holden's character (Max Schumacher) was getting ready to leave his lover (played by Faye Dunaway) and go back to his wife when he said the following dialog that kind of struck me.

"And I'm tired of pretending to write this dumb book about my maverick days in the great early years of television. Every god-damned executive fired from a network in the last twenty years has written this dumb book about the great early years of television. And nobody wants a dumb, damn, god-damn book about the great years of television."

Maybe Mr. Holden's character was too close to it all and did not see it through the eyes of the audience who saw it develop. After compiling the results of research on what seemingly was

just one Hoffman Hayride out of San Francisco, one can see how the vision of H. Leslie Hoffman who saw television as the wave of the future and found success in promoting that new medium with a live local country and western music entertainment show hosted by Dude Martin who was well known to the local Bay area radio audience in the preceding years.

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