

# The Barn Dance Opera Journal

Official Publication of:  
The Barn Dance Historical Society Inc.

A Not For Profit Organization  
Barn Dance Website: [barndance.ca](http://barndance.ca)

Price: \$2.00 (tax incl.)

Vol. 44 2005

Winter Edition

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## A Conversation with Barn Dance M.C. - Jim Swan

The Master of Ceremonies is almost as important to a show, as the show itself. No matter what mood the M.C. is in, his job is to get you in the mood for a good show. Imagine the Ed Sullivan Show without Ed and you get the picture. A great MC keeps the audience anticipating what's going to happen next. The MC often times provides comic relief, let's you know about up and coming artists and performances, paces the show to keep it flowing, cover for time, brings an audience to their feet in applause, and most of all, gives the performer and the audience a sense of razzle dazzle excitement like a barker at a side show circus. A great MC, for the moment, is the centre of attraction and should be all these things so as to give both the entertainer and the audience a true sense of an almost 'larger than life' experience! Whew!

That's a tall order to handle, aside from being a juggler, it takes a special person with those kind of skills just to keep people's attention and make the show happen. Well I do believe that Canada's Largest Traveling Barn Dance carries on that tradition with undoubtedly one of the best in the business. Jim Swan has been a fixture on radio and television in south western Ontario for the past 40 or so years, and is practically a celebrity in his own right. He certainly is one of the friendliest people I know. Currently living in London, I got to chat recently with the man who makes the Barn Dance shows 'come alive'.

Here is a conversation with Jim about his career as a broadcaster, memories, and all things Barn Dance.

*1. What got you interested in radio broadcasting, and when and where did you start?*

As a kid I listened to everything from Jack Benny to Suspense, Major Bowes amateur Hour, Arthur Godfrey, Art Linkletter and more. We listened to WJR and WGR out of Detroit and CJBC, and CFRB from Toronto. Wally Crouter was on CFRB for nearly 40 years. When I was 9 or 10, I told my mother I was going to be Wally Crouter when I grew up. I won several oratorical competition awards while attending Huron Park Secondary School in hopes of maybe getting on radio someday. A minister in my hometown of Bright had a part time job at the CKOK radio in Woodstock. At 18, I got a part time job working weekends as an announcer

(1961). The summer of '63, I worked full shifts, and then got a full time position by fall. I should have gone back to school, but at 18, with a head full of dreams, taking the full time job seemed like a no-brainer, and I jumped at the chance. I have a brochure and tapes that promoted 'Slim Jim Swan with the Sweetest Sounds of Sixty Three'.

*2. CKNX in Wingham was a big part of your career, tell me about what it was like at that time. Did you know CKNX owner Doc Cruickshank?*

I like to tell people that I was born in Bright, but I grew up and lived and worked in Wingham while working at CKNX for 14 years (1964 - 1977). I arrived 3 months after the opening of the new building, constructed after the devastating fire that destroyed the radio and TV station that had been housed in a former high school building. The new building was designed for broadcasting. They called Wingham 'a little CBC' in that the programs were still presented in a mosaic fashion. Each show had a billboard opening, content, and theme, and a closing. We had shows like, "Folk Tunes of the Day" followed by "Hayloft Hoedown". I replaced Joel Thompson for the morning show. We played country music from 6 to 7, middle of the road from 7 to 9. After the newscast at 9 we featured "Hymn Time" with Horald Victor Pym, followed by 15 minutes of live commentary by local clergy on the "Minister's Study".

It was so exciting and challenging, we practically lived at the station. I got married in May of '64 and moved into an apartment. My landlord was Mrs. Walters, the mother of CKNX employee, Marg Walters-Brophy.

In 1964 everything was live. (mainly television) We'd memorize commercials and pitch them live. The viewer would see Jim Moore doing a Cdn. Tire commercial one night and Gord Redding or Stewart Shaw doing it the next night. There were different directors too but the one thing that didn't change was the copy.

By this time though, live radio shows were history, the Barn Dance had ended about a year or so just before I arrived. CKNX was a CBC affiliate and would get program feeds from network. Everything else was local and produced live. Even "Twilight Theatre" after the news broadcast had a live intro, inserted breaks, and a closing goodnight. You'd be there until 'sign-off'.

I didn't really get to know Doc Cruickshank although I'd see him walking the hallways some-

times. His son Bud, was in charge of television by then, and son John Cruickshank, became radio station manager. I was in awe of Doc though as he was already known as a legend in broadcasting.

*3. What are your recollections of the Barn Dance past and the performers. Is there a difference in today's Barn Dance shows and those from yesteryear?*

I remember when I was 9 or 10 visiting my cousin one summer in Elora. Everyone in town seemed excited because the Barn Dance was coming to town. We were too young to go, but we did listen to it on the radio that night and were fascinated by the fact it was happening right there in that very town. It was a 'big deal' having a story to tell about the 'radio' coming to town.

In 1961, I was working on radio in Woodstock and saw one of the last Barn Dance shows at that time. Earl Heywood and Al Cherny (who was already appearing on 'Country Hoedown' at the time, which would later become the Tommy Hunter Show) were on the bill. I was spinning Earl's records on 'The Oxford Country Ranch House' on CKOK. I eventually got to meet and work with Earl Heywood at CKNX, since he was a copywriter and wrote commercials, obits and auction sales for the Noon Farm Show. I also got to know Al Cherny, and Ernie King, as

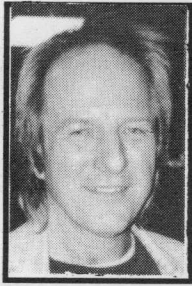
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*Barn Dance M.C. - Jim Swan*

## The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



The Barn Dance show of October 17, 2004 at the Heritage Theatre in Wingham was a sold out performance. The show featured sons, daughters, nieces and nephews and families of many of the original Barn dance entertainers and musicians. For me personally, this was one of the best Barn Dance shows in recent memory. The whole performance was like a bridge between past and present, and there was definitely an aura in the air.

The idea for this particular Barn Dance was something I had kicking around for the past 5 or 6 years. I knew it would be a huge undertaking, especially to track down and contact some of the performers and I know that some of us questioned whether this idea would even garner enough interest. Once we decided to follow through on the show, it came together like bees to honey. The "Next Generation" Barn Dance show wouldn't have happened without many of the Barn Dance board members pitching in to help, especially Doug Dietrich, who ran it by Heritage Theatre manager, Larry Mercey. Once we all agreed to go ahead with it, everyone got involved in contacting potential performers.

It's ironical that many, if not most of the original Barn Dance gang and the Ranch Boys group passed on the love of country music to their offspring. How could they not be influenced, since this musical heritage was a part of them at home and became a staple on local CKNX radio and later television as well.

Some that couldn't be reached were, Harvey and Connie who are son and daughter, respectively, of Ranch Boy fiddler, Ross Mann. Bobby Kingston, son of Barn Dance pioneer, Jack Kingston, expressed interest in being a part of the show but living in Las Vegas made it kind of difficult just to travel to Wingham to make a brief appearance. My sister Patricia would have been onstage to perform with the rest of the Heywood family, but was on vacation at the time.

We knew in advance from the brisk ticket sales, that there would likely be a capacity crowd. This show was as well received as an earlier performance by pioneer originals from the Barn Dance era and had

the same nostalgic quality about it. The audience seemed to sense this as well with smiling faces of approval and an overwhelming response after each song. Barn Dance Master of Ceremonies, Jim Swan paced the show like clockwork and took everyone on a journey to a familiar place and time, as if the original Barn Dance show was broadcasting live from the Heritage Theatre in Wingham.

Of course my parents, Earl and Martha, my wife Jeanette and our two kids, Janessa and Kianna performed as the Heywood Family. The Otterbein family also played some great old time country with Wayne and wife Judy on vocals, their son Jim on guitar and vocals and Wayne's dad Lloyd Otterbein on dobro. Bruce Robertson, nephew of Don and Cora Robertson (from the Ranch Boys), sang some familiar country classics. Pioneer Lynn Russwurm and his son, Lance, did a great rendition of one of Lynn's songs, "I Cast a Lonesome Shadow". Ranch Boy and Barn Dance pioneer, Hughie Elder and daughter Linda sang some great country tunes. Bob McDonald, son of Barn Dance original pioneer performer, Hank McDonald, also sang some vintage country songs as well.

It was a real treat to have the singin' Irishman Clark Johnson's daughter, Linda on stage to do one of her dad's signature songs, "The Same Old Shillelagh that I got from Donegal". Linda even had her dad's old Irish tam on, as she clutched Clark's original shillelagh that he used to perform with. Rod Ambeau, son of Barn Dance pioneer original, Lucky Ambeau, came all the way from Gananoque with his mom, not only to perform, but to accept the pioneer award for his dad. What an honour. It might seem a little uncanny, but when Rod was singing, for a moment he looked just like his dad used to when he performed onstage on the original Barn Dance show. The show wouldn't be complete without a performance by "The King" ... I mean, Ernie King, of course. There wasn't a dry eye in the house when Ernie and his daughter Michelle sang a song they'd done for years, "It'll Come Back".

It was great to see so many people come out to support this Barn Dance show and it was equally as wonderful for myself and the other entertainers, to see and talk to so many old friends. Almost everyone agreed that they wouldn't have missed it for anything. I know myself that this show not only made me proud to be one of the performers, but I also felt that I was just as much a part of the audience too. Somebody said to me that afternoon, "We just loved it! You should do this kind of show again sometime." Maybe not right away, but I am

## The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

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(or leave a message)

**BARN DANCE WEBSITE:**

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sure that the wheels are already turning thinking of who we might have missed and when we could do it all over again. Start spreading the word. It's Barn Dance members and Barn Dance type people like yourselves who make shows such as this a roaring success.

Hope to see you at the next Barn Dance.

Comments? Please Contact -

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## BOOKING THE BARN DANCE

*If you are interested in  
more information about booking the  
Barn Dance Musical Production,  
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**Wayne Otterbein,**

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## NEWS & NOTES

The Otterbein family took in performances at Renfro Valley in Kentucky this past fall. It was a fun weekend of good country music. Not only did they get to hear some great country music, they also got invited to a real "barn jam" at an old barn set up with instruments and amps in the rural outskirts of Renfro Valley. There were pickers and singers from the area performing at the barn and it wasn't too long before they invited the Otterbeins with a "ya'll come and join in". So Wayne and Judy started singing some good old country tunes while Lloyd played dobro with the band. Great folks and lots of fun in good old Kentucky.

Blyth Campout Co-ordinator, and Barn Dance board member, Bill Simmermaker is going into the studio to record his first solo country CD. The songs will be mostly made up of some of Bill's favourite cover tunes with a few originals as well. Barn Dance band members will be laying down most of the music to be recorded at The Bridge studio, with veteran producer, Bill Braun. We'll keep you posted on the completion date.

A new quilt is underway, by Verna Steffler and friends, for the annual Barn Dance quilt raffle, and tickets will be available at upcoming Barn Dance shows, or from Barn Dance board members and volunteers.

Barn Dance member and country / bluegrass performer, Al Widmeyer has been invited to play in Holland this summer with his old buddy, country singer John Hamm from London, Ontario. John's latest CD sparked some interest with an old contact in Holland and so he asked Al to be part of the band to do a mini-tour there this year. Al said he might perform "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" on dobro if he gets a chance, or maybe "The Windmills of my Mind". Yeah, sure Al. Don't take any wooden shoes.

The latest Heywood Family CD 3 Generations, which has been delayed, should be out sometime this spring. The original Heywood Family album will also be available as a CD and both CDs will be sold together as a package at a special price.

Michael T. Wall has just released his latest single, "The Ballad of Earl Hev-

wood" to radio stations in Canada. Michael has been busy at Sal's studio in Erin this past year and Sal Noguera (owner), produced and played drums on this cut as well, along with Steve Miller on bass, Gerry Companion on guitars and Barn Dance fiddler Mike Slauenwhite playing twin fiddles.

Bobby Kingston, son of the late Barn Dance performer, Jack Kingston, has just released a new CD as well, titled, "Lounging Around". It includes some of the most requested songs that Bobby plays with his band, so I'm sure it has an almost 'live' feel about it. Bobby lives in Las Vegas, Nevada, and fronts his own country band of top notch players who are playing live shows constantly.

And in case you missed it this past December 19th, drummer / singer / studio owner, Jay Riehl and Jake Leiske of Farmer's Daughter finally tied the knot and got hitched. A big buck and doe party was held at the Stratford Colliseum where a large contingency of friends and family gathered for celebration and live entertainment by South Mountain, Farmers Daughter and several guest performers. Now you've done it Jay!!

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

*If you would like to volunteer to help out at any of our Barn Dance shows and events throughout the Barn Dance season, please phone*

**(519) 357-2160 or Wayne Otterbein at  
(519) 235-4783 or (519) 235-0559.**

*It's a labour of love, and we'd love to have you  
give us a helping hand!!*

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**The 8th Annual Barn Dance  
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and Jamboree**

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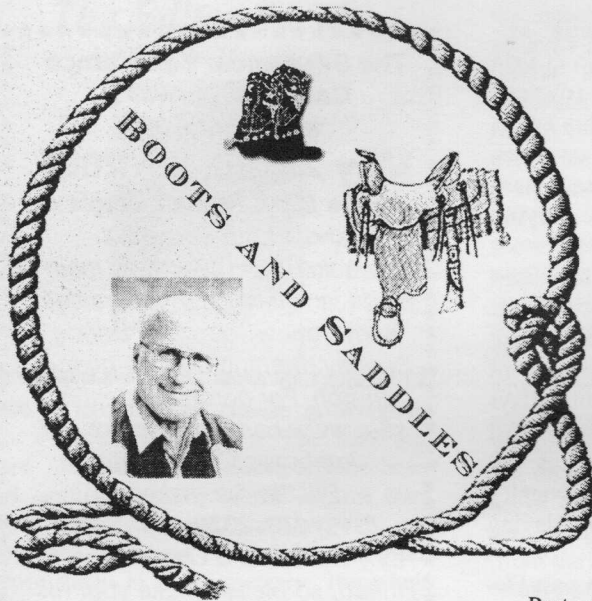
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Souvenir Mugs -	\$ 5.00 ea.
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CD - Vol. 3	\$20.00 ea.
CD - Vol. 1, 2 & 3	\$50.00 set
Cassette - Vol. 1	\$10.00 ea.
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Souvenir 1997 Calendar	\$ 5.00 ea.
Barn Dance Logo T-Shirts (black or white only)	
Sizes M, L, XL	\$10.00 ea.
Souvenir Hats	\$10.00 ea.
NEW Al Cherny CD - "Live / The Lost Recordings"	\$20.00 ea.
NEW Eleanor & Graham Townsend CD "The Talented Townsends"	
(36 unheard recordings)	\$20.00 ea.
<i>All purchases include GST.</i>	

*Please include \$3.00 per item for mailing  
or pick up at Ernie King Music.*



By Lynn Russwurm

Let's take a look at some of the upcoming CD releases that are planned for the next little while. I'm sure most of you are familiar with our releases to date, Vol. 1, 2 and 3 of "It's The Saturday Night Barn Dance", "Al Cherny Live, The Lost Recordings" and Graham and Eleanor Townsends, "The Talented Townsends". On the 3 Barn Dance CDs we gave you 85 performances by Barn Dance artists, past and present. We have a few more rare items but not enough for a full CD so that project will have to stay on the back burner for the time being.

As you may or may not know, our manufacturing of the CDs was handled by Holborne distributing until they went into receivership about a year ago leaving us to find a new source. The Townsends CD was handled by Don Scotland, of The New Toronto Stereo Shack and he also manufactured some of each of our other items to tide us over until we could come up with a new distributor. Well, we're happy to say plans have been finalized to put production and distributing in the hands of Jack Boswell of Heritage Music. CDs will be available in certain stores, by mail order through Heritage Music and as usual will be available at our Barn Dances and Concerts. Three volumes of "Saturday Night Barn Dance" will not be re-manufactured, so there won't be any more once our present stock is gone. However, through Heritage we will be compiling a "Best of The Barn Dance" which will contain all our major artists and the best performances from the three present volumes. Heritage already has the Al Cherny and Townsends on the market.

One more project that is in the works

will be a CD of Jim Magill and The Northern Ramblers. Jim was one of Canada's top fiddlers until he passed away in the early fifties. He was a contemporary of Don Messer and they often exchanged tunes. Had he lived he would probably have been in the running for a major TV show, like Don Messer's Jubilee. He left us a heritage of many fiddle tunes on the London label that today are very hard to find. We have been fortunate in obtaining copies of two of his radio shows that emanated from the CFRB studios for many years, ending only with the death of this fine fiddler.

Part of the mandate of The Barn Dance Historical Society is to preserve and honour the pioneers of not only the Barn Dance but also others in the country music field in Canada. To this end we will be looking for other unique and deserving projects as they become available in the future. If you have any ideas along these lines or have some material we could use, please get in touch with us.

By the way, if you still haven't picked up copies of our Barn Dance CDs, I suggest you do so as once our present stock is gone there will be no more. We have a bargain price of \$50.00 for the complete set which contains 85 performances - well over 3 hours of great music, what a bargain! In this day and age most new CDs released contain about 10 songs. You're lucky if you get 30 minutes of songs.



Jim Magill

*Continued from Page 1*

well as Don and Cora Robertson. For a time I hosted 'Circle Eight Ranch', with a cast that included Hughie Elder, Ross Mann, Sharon Strong and others. I heard many stories about characters such as 'Cactus Mac' and performers like Slim Boucher, that I started to think that I knew them. No doubt I learned many of those Barn Dance stories from Johnny Brent, Earl Heywood, and station technicians like Bill Harris, Elmer Purdon and Roy Bennett.

The first Barn Dance show that I was part of was in the early 70s, for a Barn Dance Reunion held in Ayton for their centennial. I read the commercial for Whittichs Bakery. There were about 3,000 people there and some of the artists were Bill Mankiss, Lloyd Bank, Earl & Martha Heywood, Ernie King, and of course, MC Johnny Brent. I can remember the level of excitement surrounding that live broadcast. That is the one thing that is different about today's shows. They aren't broadcast, so time isn't as critical. You have to be in a studio watching a clock to really appreciate what has to happen to bring a show like that right on the mark. Dead air couldn't happen, so musicians were expected to 'hit it' as soon as they were introduced. Any adjustments were done ahead of time or on the fly. Other than that, I think the shows are very close to what you would have heard and seen then. In fact, I suspect given the level of musicianship on today's show, the product today's audience gets is at least equal to, if not superior to what audiences heard back in the 50s. From a technical standpoint there is little doubt that today's equipment and sound is much better than the old days. But today's artists play the show in the spirit of the live broadcast, and so when we do a presentation, it is pretty close to what those live shows were like.

4. *Can you recollect some of your most memorable moments at CKNX and fondest memories of the Barn Dance?*

Some highlights are in a way related to what the Barn Dance was, and is. I cherish the memory of doing a live Christmas show that featured all of the staff of the station on the air. It was cherished because it portrayed the depth of the lives of the people who were part of CKNX. It wasn't just the people you saw on TV and heard on the radio every day. It was Johnny Day, and Fred Steinmetz and Carl (Casey) Casemore, and Colin Campbell and Keith Robinson, their wives and their children. And we knew that the management at the station cared about all of them, and by association, we cared about the people who watched the station. Just like as a kid being in the town where that Barn Dance happened made me feel important. That Christmas show said, there is something important here in the lives of these people, and so sent the message to the viewer that there was something impor-

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Continued from Page 4

tant about their being alive too.

5. *What happened after you left CKNX and moved on to CFPL in London?*

I left CKNX to host "Morning Break" on CFPL-TV, from '77 to '83. I worked with Carol Campbell, who was Carol Harrison before she married, and had worked in Wingham at CKNX. Carol was the first female Newscaster at CKNX, so she was a broadcast pioneer. Those years were probably some of the greatest in my career, I loved the people I worked with, and I was treated royally. We met and interviewed most of the movers and shakers in London, and also some of the literary figures of the day. Pierre Berton visited the show annually, Ben Wicks, Margaret Atwood, Jim Unger of Herman fame. The list is long and lustrous, and it was a pretty dazzling experience for a boy from Bright who had just come to the 'Big City' from Wingham.

After Morning Break I was part of a team that pioneered an early morning television show, "First Edition", the first non-network breakfast television show. For five years during that time I hosted, and produced weather, sports, and feature reports. I eventually became the show's producer. In 1988, I was appointed "Community Relations Co-ordinator" and I held that position through to '95 when I left to return to radio at CKSL.

6. *What's your greatest achievement inside and outside of being a broadcaster? Have you attained most of your dreams?*

I couldn't say what my greatest achievement is because I guess I don't really think I've yet done anything great. But I've been a part of some great community achievements through broadcasting, such as 18 years with the annual Children's Miracle Network Telethon. My role was minor, but being part of something that raised millions of dollars to help improve the lives of children meant a great deal.

I was also associated with the Youth Talent Search from its inception in 1981, and met hundreds of talented young people. Some have gone on to become recognized figures in the entertainment business. Jamie Warren and Beverly Mahood come to mind.

I was also privileged to be asked to work with the people of London on several boards and committees, and in 1991 the Central Canadian Association of Broadcasters recognized me with the Howard Caine Award for Community Service. Also in '91, The London Community Foundation recognized me with the Ivey Award of Excellence.

Have I attained all my dreams? Well, I still live in a dream. I have a very happy and satisfying family life. Joanne and I have been married for nearly 26 years now, and our children Jill and Adam are 20 and 21, and are still at home with us as they attend Western University.

7. *What's been keeping you busy cur-*

rently?

I am presently part of the newest Medium. The Internet. MhNewMedia produces custom on-line training for business and industry, that provides a complete training system. I work with people from radio and newspaper backgrounds, as we use that experience to make the courses interesting and memorable. I've always been fascinated with computers since I got my first one in 1984.

8. *How did it feel for you and your kids when they performed on the Barn Dance at the Heritage Theatre in Wingham?*

I was extremely proud, and nervous. By the time "Celtic Fire" appeared on the Barn Dance, they had played enough gigs that we knew they would entertain well. Individually, each of the members of the group is very talented, and each of them spent countless hours taking lessons and practicing. It was just a real pleasure to see them work together like they did. "Celtic Fire" has disbanded, because several of the members are attending University. For them, it was great that they were presented the same stage and in the same program as fully professional musicians.

9. *People remember Johnny Brent as the original Barn Dance MC, but you are touted at the perfect "shoe-in" for that position. What's your reflection on that?*

Johnny Brent was the Barn Dance. It was no secret that Johnny produced and booked the shows and shaped what the Barn Dance was over a long period of time. Johnny was also the Sports Director at CKNX. But he was so immersed in the Barn Dance, that whenever there was a need to fill time on a show, he'd plug that week's upcoming Barn Dance. In fact he did it so consistently and was so known for it, that the TV directors would use the term "Plug the Barn Dance" to mean "stretch for time".

I knew and worked with Johnny at CKNX until he left to work for Carling Breweries and later, real estate. If being a "shoe-in" for Johnny means I do almost as good a job as he did, then I feel pretty good about that. The last appearance Johnny made at a Barn Dance, was in Blyth to accept the Pioneer Award. He kind of publicly handed me the torch that night. They played that segment at the memorial held for him in the Heritage Theatre after he died. I eulogized Johnny, and I said then, that nobody would ever replace him. He was the master and he loved it so much. It's a great honour to continue to fill in for him.

Johnny is always front and centre in my mind when we do the introduction to the show with the count down ... and then his opening line, "From coast to coast, people like old tyme music most". I'm always a bit nervous, and I have never uttered those words without it raising the hair on the back of my neck.

10. *You a real 'people person'. What do you get back from a Barn Dance audience?*

Well, I love people. When you look out

into the audience, what you see coming back is energy. Sometimes you look out and you know the music has transported them to places they love to be, and people they want to be with.

11. *What does the future hold for today's Barn Dance, and museum? What does it need to keep it growing and viable?*

Is there a future in the past?? Yes. I don't know where the Barn Dance is headed, but that is up to the people who come to the shows and the people who are determined to present them. The museum is the foundation of the Barn Dance. When you spend time among the artifacts, you appreciate how many people the Barn Dance touched, and how important it was in the whole social fibre of the communities in mid-western Ontario. During that era, radio was in it's heyday, and was the reflection of life at that time. Because the Barn Dance traveled, it took radio into the communities. If I may be allowed a McLuhanism: the Barn Dance arrived with a message. The message was, "this community counts, and therefore, you as part of this community are important." Sociologically, the Barn Dance was much bigger than just the music it carried.

To keep the Barn Dance growing, we need people to know that they can still see the future by visiting this part of the past. Earl Heywood was one of the original Barn Dance performers. But the night he made his debut, nobody knew who he was. But I'll bet people in the hall that night, and the people who heard him on the radio said, "Wow. That guy has a future. His voice and his songs say something to me." I imagine when Earl stood on stage that night, he looked out there with a vision of big things in his future. Sometimes now when I stand back stage and see Earl watching the young performers we present, I sense that he is suddenly back there in time and sees himself in those first shows. Well, that experience is still happening on the Barn Dance. We need to get the message out there that the Barn Dance is anchored by its heritage, but it's always connected to the young.

12. *Many folks from the Barn Dance audience have asked, "That Jim Swan fella sure is a great MC. What makes him so doggone smooth?" Well Jim, you get the last word here.*

Most things that are smooth get that way through time and exposure. If it's true for me, I guess it's probably for the same reasons. I give thanks for the time I've had, and feel blessed in the time I have. So every time I walk out on to that stage with the Barn Dance Band behind me and a great show line-up ahead, I know we are in for a "Blessed Good Time."



# Country Music Memories

as compiled by Lynn Russwurm



Sharon Strong



Hank Snow and Hank Rivers.  
Taken at Ottawa Coliseum 1964.



The Funk Family, Bob, Karen, Victor, at the Locust in Neustadt. (Bob and Victor are grand nephews of Dick Funk, featured in "Boots & Saddles" last issue.



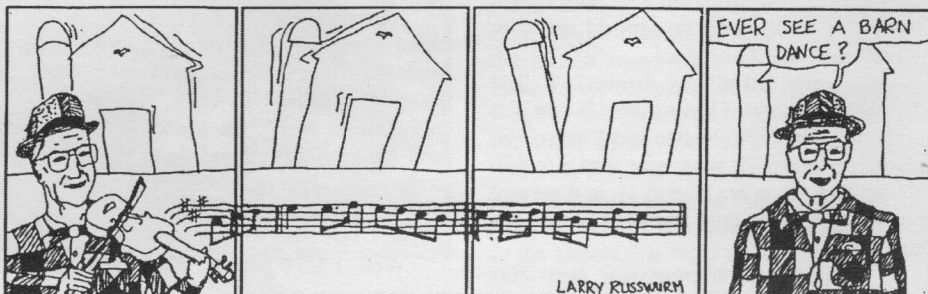
Earl Heywood and The Howard Sisters.



Taken after the Wilf Carter Show, 1954, at the Elmira Arena. Left to Right: Ward Allen, Lynn Russwurm, Bev ???, and Ken Reynolds

COUSIN OPIE

by Larry Russwurm



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**Sun., April 3, 2005**

**The Barn Dance  
Historical Society's  
Annual General Meeting.**

Starting at 1:00 p.m., at the  
Royal Canadian Legion,  
Victoria Street, Wingham, Ont.  
Downstairs.

*Newcomers Welcome.*

**Members come out and  
attend. This is your chance  
to vote, and have  
your say.**

**Free coffee and cookies.**



#### HOWDY FOLKS:

Recording technology sure has come a long long way since I first got into the music business. From scratchy acetate 78's, vinyl 45's, and LP's, 8 track tapes and cassettes to today's C.D.'s, DVD's and MP3 players, it kind of makes you wonder where recorded music will be heading next.

I can remember when I first recorded in a little booth at a record shop and sang a song that was instantly cut to an acetate record. Kind of like the equivalent of singing into a cassette machine. But my very first professional recording came around the mid to late 1940's. It was on the top floor of the Royal York Hotel in downtown Toronto. I remember how we had problems with some of the equipment picking up frequencies from incoming police calls. It

became a real nuisance trying to get a good take recorded.

Since I was signed to RCA Victor Records a lot of recordings were done in the old RCA studios in Toronto as well. That's where we recorded our original Heywood Family album "Good Old Country Singin'" and one of my best selling albums, "Tales of the Donnelly Feud". The RCA studio was big enough to accommodate a fair number of musicians. In those days there wasn't much room for error, so you had to be well rehearsed. Overdubs, or recording parts after, onto the main tracks were used very little because of the limited number of tracks. It was 4, or maybe 8 tracks back in those days. Now it's nothing less than 16, 24 or 36 and beyond if you wish.

I recollect even doing some recording at CKNX radio in the early days. Back then, most recording was done "live off the floor". In other words, you would bring in a band or musicians who had previously rehearsed the songs to be recorded and they would lay down the music while the singer would sing along, just like in a live performance. It was a more natural way of doing things and more to what I'm accustomed to.

When we recorded the latest (to be released) Heywood Family 3 Generations CD, most of the music tracks were done live off the floor with the band. What was

different this time though was, when Martha and I came in to sing our parts, we just sang along with the pre-recorded tracks without even seeing the band. My son Grant was playing with the band and pretty much knew what tempo to record the songs at so that it would be most natural and comfortable for us to sing. Sometimes it seemed kind of eerie hearing the band playing in the headphones and looking around to see just Martha and I in front of the microphone all alone in the studio.

One of my most popular songs, "Moonlight on The Manitoulin Island" was recorded late one night in the television studio at CKNX on just a 2 or 4 track tape machine. The latest re-recorded version on the new family CD features 4 fiddle tracks, strings, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, bass guitar, steel guitar, piano, keyboard, drums, Martha and I on vocals and even waves and seagulls for background effect. My, my, how recorded music has changed. But I've heard a rough mix of the new version, and I have to say it sounds absolutely wonderful. If it's any indication, the rest of the CD will sound just as great.

And remember -

***The Show Must Go On.***

Earl Heywood, Founder,  
Honorary President,  
Advisor, Museum Curator

## COME JOIN US!!

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