

# BILL and SUE-ON HILLMAN: A 50-YEAR MUSICAL ODYSSEY

*50 Years on the Road with Bill and Sue-On Hillman*

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## GIG NOTES SECTION

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*Presents*



# Part X: Trials and Triumphs on the Trail

## *Frets and Bridges*

*"I believe time wounds all heels." ~ John Lennon*

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#### **Strange Gigs**

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## **Road Hazards**

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Every band that spends much time on the road will face a steady line of annoyances and hazards -- some large, some small. For most of our peak years we worked out of our country home near Strathclair, MB, where I taught high school for 30 years. Since our weekend and summer road gigs in Canada took us as far east as Fort Francis, ON, west to the Peace River District, BC, and north to Island Lake, MB, we spent long hours on the road with occasional flights to the far north, USA and UK.

Some troubles on the trail were serious, but most were just annoying: heatwaves, 40 below temperatures, fog, blizzards, ice, hail, downpours, tent caterpillars, bugs, wildlife (deer, elk, jackrabbits, skunks, birds, dogs, etc.), drunk and crazy drivers, occasional obnoxious fans, road checks and speed traps, traffic pile-ups, vehicle breakdowns, flat tires, band equipment failures, broken strings, laryngitis, flu and colds, babysitter problems, clash with day-job schedules, finding gas stations, dozing off and going through piles of sunflower seeds to stay awake during the wee-hours return trips, long hours after the day job . . . missing career opportunities because of commitment to the "day-job," and missing important family events.

Bookings made a year in advance pretty much determined our social life. On top of this was the major cost of music equipment and keeping a trustworthy band vehicle, a few not-so-reputable managers, thefts, vandals, double bookings, cancellations or poorly organized events, bad acoustics, squabbles on the dance floor, over-exuberant fans, and stage door Johnnies.

In hindsight these weren't really major problems at all, but just part of the Grand Adventure. Our dedication to, and love of music . . . and each other, overcame all of these mostly minor bumps along our long and winding road.

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## **Rockin' and Roll Over**

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For our first cross-prairie Federal Grain Tour, Russ Gurr purchased a long mobile home. This unwieldy unit was towed behind a large rented truck, which also carried a water tank. We were looking forward to setting up on each of the planned fairgrounds in luxury and packed this home-away-from home with our stage clothes, provisions, and a few of our instruments.

One of the band crew bravely volunteered to drive the truck. We rode with him,





Soon after Lewis Kaselitz and his family moved from Tennessee, he realized his dream to host a country music festival: The Boggy Creek Call of the Wild Festival. In the early days of this long-running festival in the remote Boggy Creek area the crowds were greater than expected and there wasn't always adequate security. There were many family groups, but some of attendees, caught up in the music and fueled by their "mickey" contents, answered the "call of the wild" and posed a bit of concern at the night shows.

A number of times after our evening show I grabbed a "Security" T-shirt and joined other volunteers to attempt some crowd control. Safeguarding the cash receipts was always a concern. On the Mondays following the weekend event Lewis usually invited me to ride with him to the nearest bank. We made hurried trips over secluded roads while I literally rode shotgun, holding Lewis' loaded firearm, with a large box of the event's cash receipts on the floor between my legs.

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### Altamont North

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Lewis Kaselitz, concerned about the crowd control problems presented by the rapidly growing attendance at the Call of the Wild Festival, hired a motorcycle gang to provide security on the show grounds and in the campground areas. These dedicated bikers sometimes did their job a little too well and controlled a few of the more rowdy drunks by bashing heads. Shades of the Rolling Stones problems at the Altamont festival in California, but things never really got that crazy.

A few of the name bands from the US got a little too friendly with biker security on their way through the distant gate and made it to the stage a few hours late for their scheduled appearances. When they did show they were rather glassy-eyed, but were ready to put on wild stompin' shows.

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### Road Kill

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Considering the hundreds of thousands of miles we've driven over the last 50 years we've been pretty lucky on our road trips. On the Saskatchewan TransCanada HW we hit a large jack rabbit which went through our grill and damaged the radiator. Our trusty van has repelled attacks by a large assortment of wildlife: skunks, armadillos, road runners, crows, partridges, snakes, gophers, etc.

We've even hit three deer. The first was in a fog patch that had engulfed a bridge we were crossing over the Little Saskatchewan River near Elphinstone. Damage was

minimal - a broken side mirror. The second was on HW 10 at the Minnedosa junction. We were passing a truck on the divided highway when the truck hit a deer and the carcass was thrown up and onto our hood. The only real damage was a puncture hole in the hood from the beast's antler. I had to do some fancy talking when the Autopac insurance agent stressed that we weren't covered for flying objects. The third deer attack was on the hill and curve by the Clear Lake Golf Course. The deer was bounced into the ditch and there didn't appear to be any damage to our van. Over the years, we've had a few near misses with Homo Sapien jaywalkers, but we haven't hit any of those suckers yet.

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### **Dead Man's Curve**

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There's a curvy hill just past the Clear Lake Golf Course that has given us a spot of trouble. We experienced a foreshadowing of calamity there when a deer appeared in our headlights one night resulting in a mild collision. Then, a year later, on our way to a dance in Cowan, a sudden sleet and ice storm had turned the curve into ice rink. I lost control and rolled the van. The three of us were tossed around a bit but unhurt. The instruments in the van were so tightly packed that nothing moved.

We phoned Kerry's brother who came to get us and to retrieve the equipment. By the time he reached us our van was surrounded by a pack of other vehicles that had joined us in the ditch. This was one of only two gigs we never reached in 50 years. Our Cowan friends Ted and Margaret, who had hired us for the gig, were very understanding. . . and even helped ease our embarrassment over the "no show." Ted who raises bees has a "license to kill" bears and later presented us with a gorgeous cinnamon bear hide. This hide, head and all, is the first thing that visitors see when they enter our home . . . it even found its way onto the cover of our No. 12 CD.

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### **The Blizzard**

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We picked and sang. Crowd danced. Wind howled and snow fell. We packed up in a raging blizzard and headed south and then west into the jaws of the storm on Highway 3. Ahead was total whiteout. I stayed on the road by straining to see the edge of the highway on my side, while Sue-On shouted warnings from her side of the truck.

Crystal City is five miles from Pilot Mound and it took us an hour to reach it. We sought shelter at the Crystal City hotel. . . all was locked up. One of the hotel residents had been locked out so he crawled into the back of our crewcab with Kevin. Next we looked to the local RCMP detachment for help, and Kevin called them from a phone booth. The officer on duty was quite casual about the whole situation. We were getting a bit desperate so Kevin asked, "Well, don't you have a jail you could throw us into for the night?" The sleepy-voiced officer ignored this suggestion and came up with the following solution to our problem: "Park your vehicle and run the engine to keep warm. Roll down the windows a bit." We huddled and tried to sleep till daylight when we struck out again into the blizzard.

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### **Birthday Break and Entry**

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The January 11th blizzard of 1975 was one for the history books and a number of stranded motorists didn't survive it. We were determined to reach home after being stranded for the night in a hotel parking lot in Crystal City, but we had to fight for every mile.

After about 25 miles the truck froze up and wouldn't go farther. I left Sue-On and Kevin shivering in the cab and struck out on foot into the maelstrom. I learned later that I had actually passed two farm houses on my run, but the first thing I saw of civilization was a road sign pointing toward the village of Mather. I turned north at the intersection but found breathing very difficult. . . it was almost like being in a vacuum with the icy wind and driving snow taking my breath away.

Eventually, I bumped into a school sign beside the road and huddled beneath it in a snowbank for awhile to catch my breath and to try to warm up. Carrying on, I stumbled onto an approach to the school and broke a door window to enter the heated building. When I recovered from rolling on the floor in agony from frostbite to my hands and face I found a phone. I called what appeared to be a town number and soon the Harms family came to the rescue. I directed them back to our Ford Crewcab -- almost missing the intersection in the white-out. They took us in and I celebrated my birthday that day under very unusual conditions -- but we had to call off the wedding dance planned for that night at Inglis.

The next day saw sunshine -- they towed our vehicle to Cartwright to thaw out in a garage. Later we gave the Harms family a ride to Brandon where they were making connections to go to Hawaii. The valley at Killarney was full to the top with snow so we had to take a very round-about route. We made it!

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### **Bottoms Up!**

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A few of our gigs in Dauphin provided some amusing adventures. One Saturday night we braved an early 40-below cold snap to play for an RCMP Christmas party. The amps were wet from condensation and the stage was very slick from the snow from our boots. We set up behind a curtain while the diners finished supper and waited for our grand entrance.

As the curtains opened we went into action . . . but my Beatle boots went into an uncontrollable skid and I ended up on my bottom, holding my precious Fender Tele aloft. The audience were in shock. . . didn't know if it was part of the act and whether to laugh or look concerned. A tad embarrassing.

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### **Where'd they go?**

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We've played for many wedding dances over the years, but one in Dauphin sticks in our memory. We went through the usual wedding dance set list, but were a bit worried when no one danced. The groom's party stayed on one side of the hall, while the bride's stayed on the other. There were very few trips to the bar and very little mingling. . . or dancing.

We took our final off-stage break around midnight, but when we returned to the stage to play our last set we were met with a somewhat shocking site. The hall was empty -- only the bartender was left! We asked him if it was something we had done. He explained that one side of the hall was mainly native trying to make a good impression on the new in-laws. The other party was very religious and since after midnight it was officially Sunday morning they felt they had to leave to observe the Sabbath. All parties left. We packed up early.

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### **Cardiac Arrest . . . Teetering on the Brink**

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The backstage entrance to the upstairs auditorium at the Dauphin Allied Arts Centre

is via a narrow, steep, and turning stairway. Our stage set-up has five very large PA speaker cabinets, plus heavy amps, Fender Rhodes 88, synths, guitars, lights, drums and many cases. We have nearly always worked as a trio so set-ups and tear-downs can involve some very heavy lifting. Transporting all this gear up and down constricted flights of stairs without roadies can be very taxing . . . and dangerous.

One night while carrying a large SP-2 speaker Kevin was victim to a bit of a shift in the centre of gravity and teetered backward. He slid down the stairs with the SP-2 monster riding his chest. Allied Arts is really a top notch place to play -- once everything is in place on stage -- and we eventually went on to have a great night. Kevin, although a bit bruised and twisted, managed to do his usual super job on keys and vocals.

We obviously hadn't learned our lesson because a few years later Kevin's successor, Kerry Morris, was crushed by the same speaker bin on the same flight of stairs.

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### **Back to the Drawing Board**

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The raising of our three kids through the '80s decade took precedence over the international tours and recording projects of the '70s. The arrival of Kerry Morris as a full-time member of our trio coincided with our increasing interest in technology: the expansion of our PA to a tri-amp system, recording facilities, click tracks, a stack of synth keyboards and synth drums for Sue-On, Roland synthesizer guitars, better lighting, and an improved equipment van.

The problem now became one of packing all of this gear into a standard Ford Econoline van. We thought we had the solution. Kerry constructed large plywood crates on casters which we designed to hold the "dixie-cupped" drums, hardware, mics, cables, amp heads, lighting, and stacks of albums for off-stage sale. Everything fit in perfectly. We congratulated ourselves on this marvel of engineering inventiveness. But when it came time to lift these mammoths into the van we realized that we would have to make room for a forklift to hoist the suckers. Back to the drawing board.

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### **Searching for Gold**

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We played a summer dance in a country hall in Saskatchewan's Qu'Appelle Valley. Following the gig we made the long drive home, but had to awake very early next morning to escort a fleet of school buses on a field trip back through Saskatchewan and Alberta. Our school made a point taking the whole high school on major field trips every few years.

While dressing I was startled to find that my Chinese gold medallion embossed with my name in Chinese characters was missing. I had worn this piece on a chain around my neck for many years. Assuming it had fallen off in the change room of the hall the night before, we left the convoy when we approached Regina. We looped around to the hall in the valley to look for it.

There was no sign of the gold piece. Sue-On even went to a nearby Chinese restaurant to inquire. . . asking in Chinese if a piece of jewelry with Chinese characters had been turned in. Quite a loss: the gold, plus the sentimental value of this gift from Sue-On. We rejoined the convoy and carried on dejectedly with the tour.

We returned from our trip a few days later . . . and crawled into bed . . . tired and still a bit down in the dumps. I was awakened later during the night, however, by the

job from a sharp object under the covers. Found! The episode seems rather inconsequential now, but at the time I was pretty upset. . . and embarrassed.

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### **Barf Gig**

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In the years following our University stint when we played Brandon pubs every night we tried to avoid bar gigs. The Roblin Inn bar was an exception and we had some good nights there. At the end of each night the bartenders proudly displayed the rows of empty liquor bottles behind the bar -- casualties of a great party crowd.

One night, however, I was the casualty. Soon after we started to play I became so sick I couldn't stay on stage. The manager let me lie down and use the bathroom in one of the rooms. I tried to return to the stage a few times, but it was no go.

Looking back I remembered that just before leaving home I'd eaten some thawed and re-frozen ice cream and must have caught food poisoning. This left Sue-On and Kerry on stage to do four shows - drums and bass. Kerry didn't sing and although Sue-On had many vocals, she could only sing the harmony parts to my songs. Luckily, local musician Butch Fleury was in the crowd and came up to do a few numbers. This was the only time I was ever too sick to not complete a gig. . . until then I always believed that "the show must go on" -- Not.

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### **Wedded Blitz**

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Wedding dances were often fairly predictable and tedious affairs -- but there were exceptions. A wave of influenza hit both families involved in one of the wedding celebrations we played. They were heavily doped with antibiotics, but were game troopers and carried on with the ceremony and dance. We looked across the hall at a mass of pale, sickly flu-stricken celebrants sprawled across benches and chairs. Few of them had the energy to dance, using most of their energies for regular rush trips to the washrooms. The janitor was left with a massive clean-up job.

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### **The Dreaded Wedding Cake Ceremony**

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We had the pleasure of playing a wedding dance for a musician friend. He was a dedicated musician and spent most of the night guesting on our stage. The groom had a fabulous time playing and singing, but the poor abandoned bride spent much of the night crying on the shoulders of her parents. She perked up, however, when the wedding cake was brought out and placed on a long folding table in preparation for the cutting ceremony. Unfortunately, someone had not secured the folding legs on the table and we watched in horror as the cake slid to the floor and splattered. More tears.

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### **The Bride Hits the Deck**

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We played a wedding dance that started off beautifully. The bride, although close to nine months pregnant, was radiant in her long satin gown adorned with fresh flowers. For some reason things started to turn ugly. The bride and groom exchanged heated words over something in the middle of the dance floor. She shouted and screamed and he hauled back and decked her. It was an incredible sight. The wedding party restrained the red-faced and rather tipsy groom, while the bride lay sprawled out on the floor. The poor girl was on her back with her very prominent tummy protruding above her. Something right out the movies.

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## Kinsmen Inauguration Brawl

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One of the strangest gigs we've played started off as a community celebration in recognition of its new Kinsmen club. The town had worked hard to obtain permission to form this new service club made up of loyal brothers who wanted to do marvelous things for their community. Through the years we've always looked forward to playing for this fine organization.

At first things went well. The crowd was exuberant and friendly and obviously in a celebratory mood. But as the night went along things started to get a bit testy and the mood darkened. We never found out the reason for the growing dissension, but a few hours into the evening's dance a fight ignited on the floor. . . then another. . . and soon the Kinsmen brothers and their guests were involved in a full knock 'em down, drag 'em out brawl.

We kept playing for awhile, hoping that the music would calm the savage breasts, but eventually we, along with our instruments, retreated to a safer location off-stage. It took an hour for calmer heads to prevail and we then resumed the dance for another hour -- playing to a much smaller and a more subdued crowd. I'm not sure if they were following the Kinsmen motto: "Serving the Community's Greatest Need." Obviously some communities have very different needs than others.

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## Parking Lot Gladiators . . . Rain Barrels and Culverts . . . and Three Man Electrical Band

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We have played such a variety of gigs over the years, on so many different stages that occasionally the unexpected happens.

*Episode I:* One night we were playing a dance in a large rural community centre when there was a stampede to the exits. Our first thought was that there must be a fire or bomb scare, but we kept playing to the empty hall. Sue-On looked at Kerry and me from her perch behind the drums and shouted only half jokingly to us: "Was it something I said?" Gradually the dancers straggled back into the building and we learned that they had all crowded out to the parking lot to watch and goad on two local guys who were trying to prove their manhood in a bout of fisticuffs.

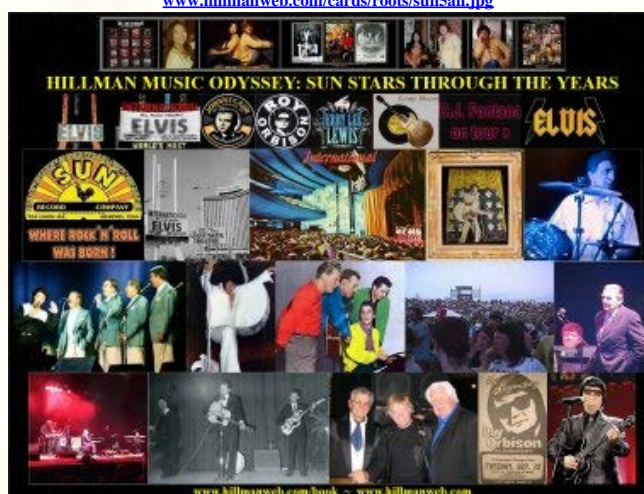
*Episode II:* We have played many arena shows and dances, and the acoustics -- unless baffling has been added -- are often abysmal. Probably the worst was a small culvert-shaped, steel arena in a small town south of Brandon. We knew we were in trouble when someone dropped a plank to the cement floor while we were setting up. The crash sent out reverberating echoes for about eight seconds. We opened with a fairly soft and sedate song, but this started which would be a steady stream of "Turn It Down!" orders during this song and the ones to follow. By the end of the evening I was playing my solid-body Fender Telecaster in acoustic mode with the amp's volume setting at zero and Sue-On was doing a half-hearted pitter patter with brushes on her snare drum.

*Episode III:* Outdoor gigs have their own set of hazards. The sky had cleared after some heavy rain showers through the day and we managed to set up on a wide, but very narrow steel low bed trailer for a street dance. When the power was hooked up and turned on sparks started to fly. Trying to sing close into the mics resulted in jaw-rattling shocks. Spectators who had crowded close to the stage for a better look at the band jumped back in terror and appeared to be lit up like light bulbs. We refused to carry on until the local electrician was called in to properly ground the stage. There are some things that bands never think of including in their contract riders.

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## SUN AND STARS

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The music that came out of Sam Phillips' Memphis Sun Studios in the '50s was a fusion of blues, C/W, bluegrass, and gospel -- and was largely responsible for our love of music and guitar. These rockabilly songs and the musicians discovered by Phillips played a major role in the birth of the exciting new music form: rock 'n' roll. Through the years Sue-On and I were fortunate to meet many of these music pioneers and to see their shows in far-flung locations around North America.

Although most are gone now, their music and legacy live on. Leaders of the pack were Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Roy Orbison. Almost as important were the many back-up musicians: Scotty Moore, Bill Black, DJ Fontana, Jordanaires, Luther Perkins, Marshall Grant, WS Holland, et al. Getting to see some of these rock pioneers was sometimes a struggle, which explains why the following vignettes are featured in the Troubles On The Trail section of our Gig Notes.

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### *1. Sun Burst: Elvis*

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One of my major influences in music had picked up many nicknames in the '50s: The Hillbilly Cat, The Memphis Flash, Elvis and the Blue Moon Boys, The King of Rock 'n' Roll, and so on. All these long monikers were eventually shortened to one name . . . a name known around the world . . . Elvis.

My sister Bonnie worked for a travel agency in the early '70s. When we told her we were planning to drive to Las Vegas after our 1970 summer tour she obtained tickets to one of Elvis's shows in the International Hotel. When we arrived in Tinsel Town we were suddenly immersed in Elvismania. . . we soon learned that the whole town went through this furor every time "The King" came to town.

On the night of the big show we queued for the late night performance and naively followed the Maitre'd into the theatre without tipping him. Everything about the show was fabulous from the opening strains of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* through to the final curtain . . . even though we had a rather dismal view of the stage. The somewhat arrogant Maitre'd seated us near the back of the theatre, behind a post, and with a table of over-excited Japanese tourists. Lesson learned. Ya gotta tip the head waiter.

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### *2. Stars Behind the Sun ~ Once in a Blue Moon*

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We attended a special early '70s Elvis show in a much more intimate Vegas showroom setting than what was featured over in the huge International. Instead of the King's big show band, with full orchestra and large array of backup singers, this show featured the stripped down band that had backed Elvis in the '50s: Scotty Moore, DJ Fontana and The Jordanaires.

Scotty, one of my guitar idols, played all the famous Sun records echo guitar riffs. The Jordanaires sang the backup vocals we had heard so many times on so many hit records in their perfect gospel/pop harmonies. There was no Bill Black on doghouse bass -- he had died back in 1965 -- but original drummer DJ Fontana and a fill-in bass player kicked out the rhythms that had supercharged Elvis on so many tours of the Southland, the Louisiana Hayride shows and his historic TV appearances all through the '50s.

There were numerous authentic costume changes, the vocals were right on for all the hits, and all the familiar moves were there. For anyone who had come under Elvis's magic in the '50s this was a dream come true -- a trip back in time to the glory days of rock 'n' roll. There was only one small problem with this show. Elvis was played by look-alike, sound-alike, move-alike tribute artist Rick Saucedo. . . but. . . *"It was a night oo-oo what a night, It was it really was such a night."*

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### *3. Sun's Early Morning Killer Storm: Jerry Lee*

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The Minnedosa Classic Rock Festival has been a major event for prairie rock fans for many years. We've made a point of attending many of the shows and have even served as a judge for the battle of the bands. The slate of top-name acts that have appeared over the years is impressive: CCR, April Wine, Steppenwolf, Lighthouse, Trooper, Billy Idol . . . on and on.

One of the major draws for us was Sun Records legend: Jerry Lee Lewis. He was to be the closing act and we were well-positioned at the front of the crowd to await his appearance. It got to be well past midnight and still "The Killer" was a no-show. Other bands filled in to help pacify the rowdies. A real treat was the return appearance of the British King of the Blues: Long John Baldry -- a major influence on all the British Invasion bands of the '60s. Baldry's rich deep blues stylings were augmented by the dynamic vocals of Kathi McDonald.

Rumours floated around that Jerry Lee had run into customs and airport problems, that the lights at Brandon airport weren't on so they had to fly on to Winnipeg, that he wasn't going to go on stage until he was paid, etc. Finally, sometime before dawn, his band set up and the rock 'n' roll pioneer's entrance was met with tired cheers. The original wild man of R 'n' R and his pumping piano burst into the act that had kept fans jumping for decades -- the weary crowd came alive and soon there was a "whole lotta shakin' going on" under the early morning stars.

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### *4. Tennessee Suns*

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The second Johnny Cash Show I attended in my early years was in the old Brandon Arena. The show started late as the troupe apparently had run into trouble with customs at the border crossing. One of the vehicles had been denied entry and as a result they didn't have all their costumes and instruments. I recall that there was a communal Telecaster guitar that was passed around from artist to artist.

From what I can remember, the show consisted of Johnny and the Tennessee Three:

Luther, Marshall and Fluke, the Statler Brothers, Buck Owens without his own band (or his own Tele), Carl Perkins and I believe Roy Clark, Gordon Terry, Bob Luman, Rose Maddox and a few more surprise guests who weren't billed. It was really a make-shift show, almost like a jam session at times, but the fans were all on board as the performers joked their way through the obstacles and it turned out to be a really entertaining show.

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### *5. Sun Sparkles and Falls: Diamond in the Rough*

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Roy Orbison played the Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium in the mid-'70s. Roy's early hits had been recorded at Sun Studios. We were soon captivated by his familiar melodies and soaring vocals, but sometime during the show we noticed that the diamond from Sue-On' wedding ring was missing.

After the lights came on at the end of the show, we spent a long time crawling around under the seats looking for the stone. Sadly, Roy hadn't stayed around to help in the search . . . a difficult enough search even without sunglasses. The search was fruitless -- a sad loss, but we came away with unforgettable memories of a great show from the Big O.

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### *Black Powder Explosions in Thunder Valley*

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We were invited to provide stage entertainment at the Black Powder Shoot and Rendezvous at Thunder Valley. This was a unique festival event held near Inglis, MB, which was promoted as a family event, featuring a day packed with activities such as picnics, tug-of-wars, buffalo meat cuisine, fireworks, etc. We set up our PA and headlined the music entertainment, which also featured some of the best local bands throughout the day.

The highlight of the festival, however, was the black powder demonstrations and target shooting. Black powder is an early form of gunpowder and dates all the way back to 7th century China and is usually made up of combinations of a nitrate, charcoal and sulphur. The marksmen were decked out in pioneer buckskins and they were armed with an interesting variety of 19th century-vintage muzzle-loading firearms including muskets, pistols and miniature cannons.

The day's events all went well, but the youngsters seemed most excited about the promised fireworks display -- an attraction very much in keeping with the black powder theme of the day. Everyone was invited to gather in close to the stage. We were shocked and somewhat dismayed, however, when we found that the fireworks had been set up right next to our stage. Soon the audience and we were deafened by the nearby explosions and were bombarded by wayward rockets, mortars, flares, and falling ash which fell on our heads and instruments. We insisted on a halt to the show until the explosives could be moved a safe distance from the stage. An exciting end to a very entertaining day.

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### *What's That Buzzing Noise?*

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We played an interesting afternoon celebration gig at the Minnedosa Ethanol Plant and Distillery. This plant is Canada's largest producer of ethanol distilled from local grain and which is then blended into gasoline. At that time they also distilled whiskey from the grain. We were surrounded by whiskey kegs and distillery equipment in the warehouse-type building that we set up in -- sort of an Al Capone and prohibition atmosphere.

Our show was videotaped for later TV showing and things appeared to be going well, but we noticed an ever-increasing buzzing sound through our PA system. Apparently the building was hooked up to a dirty unregulated power supply. By the end of the night our Peavey 800 PA amp was toast. We were booked that night in Virden so it meant a rush pack-up and hurried trip to the next gig with no way to find a PA replacement. Luckily the smaller monitor amp still worked and we got by somehow. A very costly experience.

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### All Balled Up and Out

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I've always had tonsils and lungs of steel and have had no trouble screaming endless rock 'n' roll songs. It was a surprise then that I had some problems during a Friday night high school grad dance at Notre Dame, but managed to get through it OK. The following night was a different story, however. The usually dependable pipes were gone -- nada! zilch!

We had been looking forward to this major gig at a swank Winnipeg hotel ballroom: the Lieutenant Governor's Annual Ball. I gargled repeatedly and swallowed a plethora of concoctions: Chinese elixirs, old home remedies, and over-the-counter cure alls -- nothing worked. Our vocals through each night's performance are usually broken into three parts: Sue-On's solos, my solos, and duets. The crowd was in formal wear and were expecting a classy polished performance. Sue-On gave it a game try. She went through her entire repertoire, but for our duets she only knew the harmony parts which sounded a bit weird. We were relieved -- and sorta wornout -- when we finally got to the last dance at midnight.

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### Where There's Smoke. . .

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There was another time when Sue-On was also victim of a voice problem. We drove to Pine Falls for a two-nighter dance in a packed arena. This was forest fire season and we saw and drove through numerous patches of heavy smoke on our way up. There to meet us were a retired couple who had once lived in Strathclair. Sue-On who was pregnant at the time mentioned that she had a craving for ripe, homegrown tomatoes. Our friends delivered them to our stage before the gig. Their thoughtfulness was much appreciated and we got off to a wonderful start and had a great dance.

Near the end of the dance the wind shifted and heavy smoke from surrounding forest fires became quite noticeable. We breathed acrid smoke in our motel room all night. By morning the visibility was zero. . . and so was Sue-On's voice . . . and not even ripe tomatoes helped. Kerry and Sue-On alternated on drums, bass and keys, while I sang and played guitar solos for the partying stompin' crowd for five hours. A long night.

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### What In Hell Was That!

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Mixing two or more careers can sometimes be stressful. Friday nights could be especially taxing since it was very common to work all day in the classroom, jump into our equipment vehicle, drive for three or more hours, set up all the gear, play for four hours or more, tear down, and drive home again. We very seldom stayed overnight anywhere -- preferring to get back home.

After about an hour of surfing the radio dial, we would break out the Spitz sunflower seeds and on occasions when this munching activity couldn't keep the eyes open it was time to pull over. The ritual then was to jump out onto the road and start running,

whether it be -40 or + 40 degrees, rain or snow. This usually worked, but late one night while returning from playing a Great West Life Insurance Xmas party in their headquarters building in Winnipeg I dozed off.

I fell asleep on a slight curve on the Yellowhead Route and plowed into the ditch through snow banks. Sue-On and I both awoke to see snow flying by on all sides, but I managed to gain control. By sheer instinct I hit the accelerator hard and angled back up the slope, out of the ditch and back onto the road. We carried on down the road and made it home without further incident. Not a recommended way to cure drowsiness.

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### **Band in Stitches in Oil Town**

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We've played a number of good gigs in Virden, MB over the years, but it's kind of fun to recall a few of the embarrassing ones.

#### *Episode 1: Split Leather Trousers*

One time, long ago, we entertained at the Virden Legion Club. I had just bought a pair of tight black leather trousers -- actually imitation leather. They felt good. I felt good. After a few sets we started to rock and I started to do my best Elvis moves. One giant stretch proved to be too much for the seams to withstand. A sudden cool breeze was quite welcome . . . until I realized that the stitches along the inside of both pant legs had ripped open, leaving me with an ankle-length leather skirt.

#### *Episode 2: Karate Kurtain Kicker*

Years later, after Sue-On and I had earned our black belts in Wado-Kai Karate, we joined our Sensei, Bruce Dunning, on the stage of the historic Virden Aud to take part in a karate demonstration. We were to make our appearance by bursting through the curtain openings to go into a crouch for our first kata routine.

Bruce and Sue-On made spectacular entrances and stood in position in the centre of the stage -- eyes darting to stage left wondering what had happened to their fearless karatika comrade. Then everyone's attention was drawn to the curtain that seemed to be tossing about in some sort of turmoil. I had missed the opening and was tangled up behind the curtain. The crowd was amused to see a figure in white gei finally lift up the curtain and plunge -- backward -- into position onto the stage. To save face I spun around and attacked the stubborn curtain with a flurry of karate chops. The crowd was in stitches.

#### *Episode 3: Born Too Soon*

China-Li, our third child, was scheduled to be born around Christmas time, 1985. When the Virden RCMP detachment asked us to play for their Christmas party in the Elks Hall we noticed that it was scheduled a few weeks before the big day, so we took the booking. But . . .the baby came two weeks early. A few days before the gig some RCMP members heard the birth announcement on radio and dialed a series of worried telephone calls.

We told them not to worry. Chinese women are a hardy breed, why they even work in rice paddies right up to giving birth. . . and carry on with their field work right after. Sue-On, made it to the gig, but slacker that she is she left the drums and keys to Kerry and Kevin . . . and she propped herself up against a stool for the four hour singing gig.

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### **Medic! Medic!! Medic!!!**

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Considering the many gigs we've played and the many miles we've travelled over the past 50 years, it is remarkable that we've avoided serious injuries along the way. There have been a few minor maladies though, which have required medical assistance.

### *Episode 1: Drummer in ER*

While on tour in Saskatchewan, Sue-On experienced something that all keyboard players dread -- a nasty, painful sliver off the backdrop of our portable stage lodged itself under a fingernail. We poked, prodded and jabbed, but our efforts only drove the timber deeper under the nail. The finger got so painful that we stopped at Regina hospital looking for a magical means of extraction. "This is going to hurt," warned the doctor who proceeded to poke, prod and jab with his pliers. Success. Sue-On wasn't really in much of a mood to rejoice as he victoriously hoisted and waved the bloody hunk of wood in front of her.

### *Episode 2: Stitches in ER*

Bandmate Kerry Morris suffered a freak mishap during a Hallowe'en costume dance in Benito, not far from the Call of the Wild site. We three had finished the first set and Kerry attempted to whip off his Fender bass to go into his break. Unfortunately the guitar strap caught on something and the side of the bass clobbered him right above the eyes. He fought to remain conscious while blood streamed down his face from the wound. Two nurses in the audience rushed him over to the nearby medical centre where they stitched and bandaged the cut. Remarkably, the dedicated and resilient Kerry returned by the end of our long break to finish the gig.

### *Episode 3: Pleurisy in the Studio*

We were recording one of Sue-On's lead vocal tracks in the last of our Free Spirit sessions at Winnipeg's Century 21 Studios. She was suffering from a major chest cold and couldn't catch her breath. Al Jones, producer of the Free Spirit project was an experienced physiotherapist and suggested that she tighten a belt around her chest to ease the discomfort somewhat.

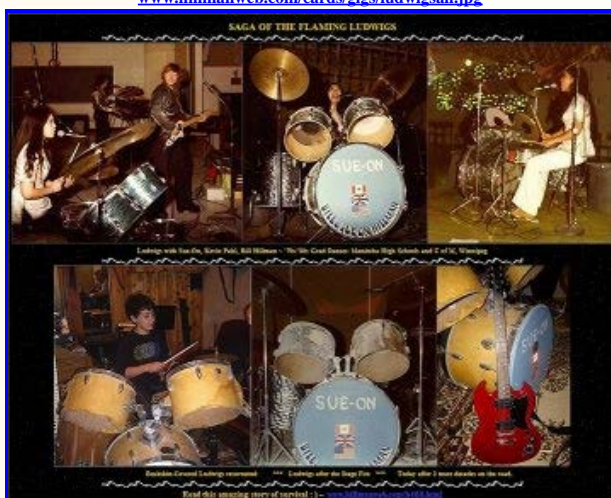
The pain in her lungs became such that she did the whole song by singing one word or phrase at a time -- engineer Colin Bennett expertly strung all the bits together into a cohesive track. She was determined to finish the song -- which she did. By this time she was in pretty rough shape as I rushed her to ER. The doctor on call confirmed Al's diagnosis: pleurisy. Whew!

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## Saga of the Flaming Ludwigs

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[www.hillmanweb.com/cards/gigs/ludwigsall.jpg](http://www.hillmanweb.com/cards/gigs/ludwigsall.jpg)



We had the misfortune of playing for a social in Brunkild on the same day that a local family had been killed in a tragic traffic accident. . . a very sombre, sad and unresponsive crowd. So we pulled an old R&R trick and set fire to Sue-On's drums (actually a stage light had fallen too close to the side of the bass drum and set fire to the plastic laminate).

As flames engulfed the drums the audience tried to help avert a disaster by throwing beer and water on us. Finally a powder fire extinguisher was brought in to blanket the drums, and the already wet band, in white. While we slipped around in the swampy goo on stage to assess the damage the crowd suddenly went wild and broke out of their grief by leaping onto the tables and shouting hysterically for more.

We defied electrocution and fired up the amps . . . and naturally our first song had to be "Smoke On The Water" : ) . . . The rest of the night was a hoot. At the end of the gig the hall's janitor arrived and looked in dismay at the mess on the stage. The poor man whined, "What'd ya do that for?" We explained that it was part of our show and we did it during every performance. Keith Moon would have been proud.

We later salvaged the Ludwigs by scraping off the char and covering them with buckskin -- and put them back on the road. These 50-year-old Ludwigs sound even better now. True Story.

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### Bobby Curtola Demolishes the Cantina Stage

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Popular Canadian singer, Bobby Curtola who I toured with in the '60s, lived in Brandon for a few years in the early 2000s, which made it possible for us to get together again after so many years and to plan and play numerous Manitoba special events and casinos. Even more fun were our numerous jam sessions at the Cantina club. They were always rockin' nights.

One night while really getting it on Bobby called his manager and a business associate to the stage. We plunged into a loud and raucous old rock song that everyone knew. Bobby and his two buddies shared one mic and were having a great time belting out the lyrics and stomping to the beat. The stage was bouncing from the weight of the three exuberant singers.

Suddenly there was a loud "crack" and we looked around to find the cause. The stompin' trio had partly disappeared. There was a large hole in the stage where they had fallen through. Since no one was hurt it really was a hilarious scene and all of us, including the embarrassed singers, rolled on the floor in laughter. Bobby, always the great sport, autographed the big chunk of stage, which was later hung in an



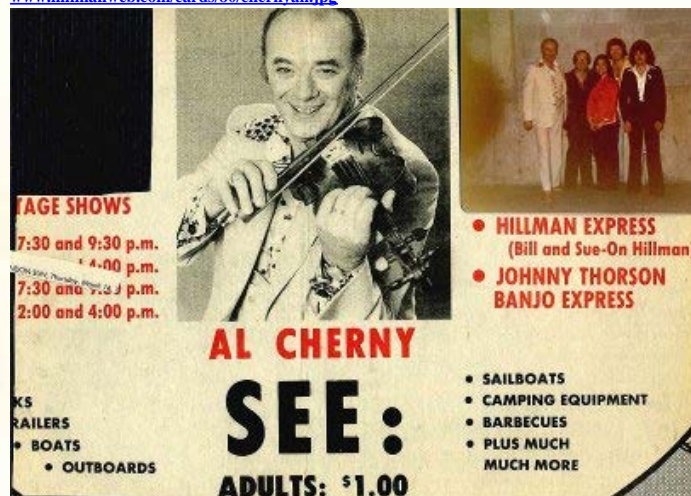
honoured place on the Cantina wall.

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## A Whole Lotta Bull with Al Cherney

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[www.hillmanweb.com/cards/80/chernvall.jpg](http://www.hillmanweb.com/cards/80/chernvall.jpg)



We played the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair at the Brandon Keystone Arena numerous times. One week we were booked to play in the Bull Ring Amphitheatre, alternating with appearances in a larger display room -- an interesting venue. The audience in the Bull Ring location sat in seats rising up above us in a semi-circle. Between the amphitheatre seats and the stage was an open area where show bulls were regularly

paraded around for inspection. The odour from the bull droppings was rather pungent.

What made this gig really special, however, were the special guests that we backed. The headliners were well-known entertainers from the Tommy Hunter CBC-TV Show: champion fiddler, Al Cherney and plectrum banjo whiz - "Captain Banjo," Johnny Thorson. Al played many of his show numbers in double and triple time, which demanded some special backing. The rapid beat gave Sue-On a real work out on drums, but both guys were really helpful and great fun to work with.

One afternoon, they even volunteered to look after our newborn son before the sitter arrived, while Sue-On was setting up her drums. We invited them for an after-show Chinese meal at Sue-On's family's restaurant, which caused some excitement among the locals, since both entertainers were very well known from their TV appearances.

All was going wonderfully well until we received a call from our neighbour back home that our beloved Great Pyrenees dog ("Mariah of the Plains" aka "Mya"), the pet we had brought back with us from a Montana tour, had died.

**Sue-On's Memories of the Gig:** That was a month after our son Ja-On was born (Feb 17)! We took Ja to the arena where we were to set up, and Al Cherney babysat the infant while I set up my drums. He looked so comfortable holding the month-old baby. I've accompanied fiddlers playing Orange Blossom Special many times, at double speed, but WHOA! Al's lightning speed on his fiddle did me in. It was all I could do to snap in some beats for emphasis... This all followed backing Johnny Thorson on his banjo express!

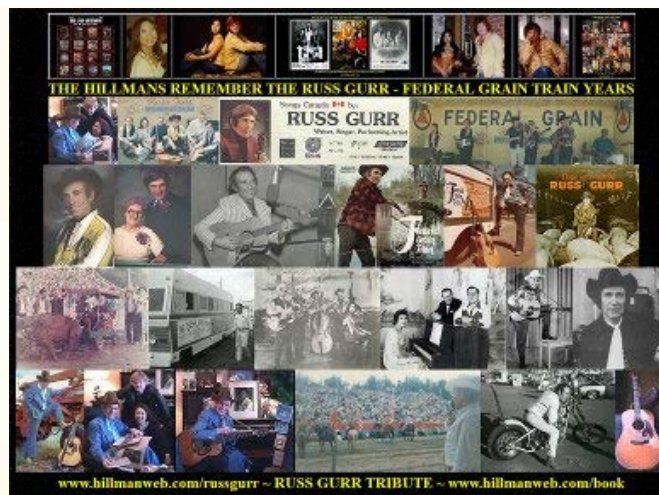
After the show, we took the gang to my family's restaurant, Soo's, which we later bought and ran for 10 years, for a late supper. Al and Johnny told many stories over dessert (actually a sucker candy usually given out to children at the restaurant.) My brother Ken was thrilled to be sitting with one of his favourite entertainers from the Tommy Hunter show, and to think his little sister was performing with Al Cherny!

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## The Singing and Yodelling Farmer

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[www.hillmanweb.com/cards/70/russall.jpg](http://www.hillmanweb.com/cards/70/russall.jpg)



Russ Clarence Gurr (December 23, 1918 - November 8, 2011) -- Russ was a very successful farmer, but throughout his 92 years much of his life revolved around music. He was a prolific songwriter and storyteller and so many of his lifetime experiences and interests are reflected in that body of work. He also mixed his love of the land and music and family with a sincere social consciousness. Throughout the fifties he served as the Progressive Conservative organizer for rural Manitoba. It was also during this time that Russ's singing career blossomed and he became well known across Western Manitoba through his regular performances on CKX-TV.

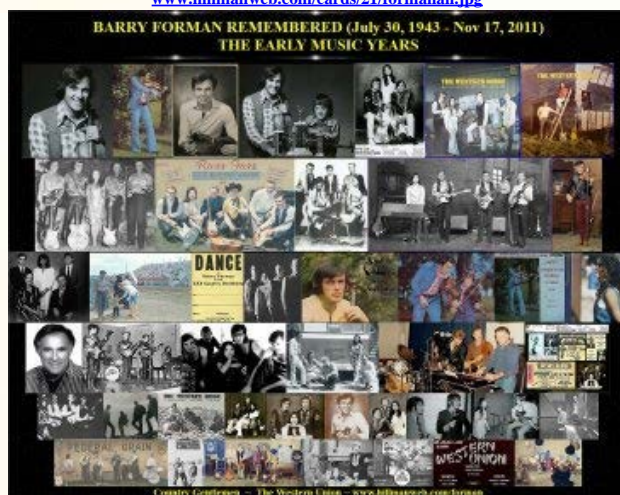
I first became aware of his talent through those performances in the early days of television, little suspecting that in a few years my future wife and I would spend many summers touring across the prairies with him. These fair and exhibition show tours were sponsored by Federal Grain Co. and later Eli Lilly Co. through the late '60s and early '70s. We were all very proud to see him chosen to perform for Queen Elizabeth II as part of Manitoba's 1970 Centennial celebrations. We stayed in touch through his later years, but our fondest memories are of the time we spent on the road together. Russ was a superb entertainer and many generations were touched by his talent.

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### [We Miss You Fellow Traveller](#)

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[www.hillmanweb.com/cards/21/formanall.jpg](http://www.hillmanweb.com/cards/21/formanall.jpg)



Barry William Forman (July 30, 1943 - November 17, 2011) -- Music played a major role in Barry's life. While still in Rivers High School he formed the popular Country Gentlemen band that became well-known through its many CKX Television shows, dances dates, Co-Op Neighbour Nights and a multitude of other live appearances across Western Manitoba. This band, with longtime friends and bandmates -- myself and Sue-On, and Jake Kroeger -- evolved into the Western Union.

Barry went on to play bass and fiddle with us on 10 Canadian record albums and we travelled many thousands of miles together. Three of these albums were acclaimed solo fiddle albums, one of which also featured his nine-year-old son Kent. As part of our Western Union band, Barry spent many summers touring Western Canada as part of Russ Gurr's Federal Grain Train Show.

Following this, Barry, Sue-On and I went on to play Exhibition Grandstand Shows in State Fairs and Rodeos across Northwestern USA. Barry later teamed up with son, Kent, to work as a popular duet: the Forman Fiddles. The duo represented Manitoba Tourism in a series of shows across the US. Barry also worked closely with daughter Shauna in promoting her successful music career. All through his music years Barry balanced his love for performing with creating and running a string of very successful Ford Dealerships: "*Not That Far From You*"

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### Memories of Mick Sandbrook

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On any long journey one meets many friends and sadly, too little time is spent with special ones before parting. One such friend was Michael Clive Anthony Sandbrook of Middlesbrough, England. Unfortunately, he died too young at 61 years after a lengthy battle with cancer. Musicians develop a special bond through their music and Mick will be remembered for his camaraderie, generosity, and musicianship by every musician who shared a stage or studio with him.

We met Mick near the end of our first tour of England when he offered to drive our equipment van down to London. We kept in touch over the next year during which time he lined up musicians and studio time for our Newcastle sessions. He contributed rock solid and inventive bass lines for that session as well as providing harmony vocals.

Two years later he organized a joint recording session for us at Guardian studios near Durham. This time the contributing musicians were his band, Desperado, and again Mick provided bass and backing vocals. Mick and his lovely wife Margaret generously opened their home to us and our toddler son, Ja-On, and even lent us their van which took us on trips all over the Isles.

We were so glad that they later were able to visit us in Canada. Mick played bass with us on our summer gigs. In more recent times they royally welcomed our son Robin who was backpacking overseas. In 2007 it was a thrill to renew our friendship with the Sandbrooks, revisit clubs we had played years ago and to see Mick and his

band in action again.

During Mick's three-year battle with cancer, Margaret kept us up to date with reports on his ordeal. Mick's long battle with the disease ended on September 23, 2013 -- a sad loss. We'll miss you, old friend. To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.

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## Cure-Alls

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Most musicians face a number of medical problems along the trail. I had never been guest of a hospital until my 60s. Then all hell seemed to break loose: ear operations and vertigo, chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy (CIDP), radical prostatectomy and 35 zaps of radiation for cancer, kidney stones, blood clots, eye operations for dry eye, and heel spurs -- all in the space of 10 years. Sue-On even had a mild heart attack after the death of her 101-year-old mother. But none of this stopped the music -- the cure-all and the absolute best treatment for all of life's twists and turns. We never stopped pickin' and music carried us through it all. Guitars and song were always nearby. We owe a special thank you to the very talented and generous Ron Halldorson who cheers up everyone at the Winnipeg Cancer Clinic with his regular visits with his guitar.

We've been so lucky to have kids so involved in health care careers. Ja-On has the largest massage therapy clinic in Brandon, and China-Li is an MD who has gone on to specialize in radiology. Son, Robin, works for an IT company and has designed and promoted Websites for many health service-related organizations. Through the years there have been times when I could barely crawl to the stage. . . but, once things start jumping, the energy returns and all maladies retreat. It's all the religion I've ever needed.

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## The Beat Goes On

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[www.hillmanweb.com/cards/21/chfestall.jpg](http://www.hillmanweb.com/cards/21/chfestall.jpg)



We were involved in organizing the Chinese Pavilion at the Annual Lt. Governor's Winter Festival in Brandon for a number of years. Although we didn't play too much music until the after-show parties, Sue-On and I were very involved in the event. Many hours were spent planning the food and merchandise areas, scouting and hiring entertainment, hosting, setting up the sound system, catering the gala opening for dignitaries at City Hall, and riding herd on the volunteers.

The hundreds of photos showcasing these events are featured on our Website.

Our venue at the Downtown Gallery Mall was filled to overflowing each day with long queues waiting to gain entry. The food menu featured Chinese fare and imported beer, the display room offered Chinese art and merchandise for browsing and purchase, and traditional Chinese music was heard throughout the area. The main attraction for most however, was the large centre stage on which we featured a troupe of lion dancers and musicians, martial arts demonstrations, acrobats, magicians,

Chinese singers and instrumentalists, fashion shows, folk dancers, jugglers, and mysterious face changers accompanied by a variety of other entertainers direct from China.

The last year we did this was particularly stressful. The timing of the Festival coincided with another busy celebration event: Chinese New Year. Dedicated volunteers were hard to recruit and the whole event involved very long hours for months before and during the Festival week. Immediately following WinterFest, Sue-On had organized, promoted and emceed a major show in the Westman Centennial Auditorium, featuring a company of touring Chinese entertainers. It was also at this time that her beloved 101-year-old mother passed away.

The stress of all of this, culminating in her Mom's funeral, resulted in Sue-On being admitted to hospital in Brandon and Winnipeg, suffering from a mild heart attack. My amazing mate soon made a full recovery and resumed her teaching duties at Brandon University within weeks.

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### **RCMP and Canada Pride**

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The June 2014 deadly ambush of five Moncton RCMP officers (3 killed) brought forth an incredible rollercoaster of emotions -- from the horror of the lockdown in Moncton, the feeling of tremendous loss at the senseless death of the three brave members of the RCMP family, the relief at the recovery of the two injured members of the force, and the sadness of loss felt by the immediate families and friends of the fallen. It was difficult to watch the ceremony at Moncton Coliseum without shedding a tear for all those immediately affected -- and for our whole nation.

We have had a long association with the RCMP -- working with the Musical Ride on our summer fair circuit during Canada's Centennial, performing at their Regimental Balls and Christmas parties, depending on their assistance during long fair parades, and trusting them to keep our home safe and secure. A former musical director of the RCMP band even engineered our Free Spirit recording session.

Sue-On's proudest association was being chosen as a founding member of the Commanding Officer's Advisory Committee on Cultural Diversity, "D" Division from July 1993 - December 2007 when she retired.

There were many highlights during these fourteen years on the committee, but none can compare to the pride felt when she and the Committee attended graduation at the RCMP Training Academy Depot in Regina -- to be part of that incredible ceremony, to be a Canadian protected by these dedicated men and women.

Too often, we take the dedicated service of these men and women for granted. Sadly, it takes tragic events such as that in Moncton to shake our apathy. We need to give our heartfelt thanks to all the men and women in the RCMP, in our local police force, and their families for their sacrifice. We need to show our pride in them. They are not just the enforcers of the law; they are a symbol of our country - a safe place to raise our families.

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### **The Day the Music Died**

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The closing of Ken Daniels Cantina Club was a sad day for Brandon musicians. For two decades this unique building was a haven for Brandon musicians and music lovers and we've shared many anecdotes and photos of it previously in this Odyssey. It was the scene of countless jam sessions, rehearsals, and get-togethers. After retiring

from Brandon University, professor Daniels and wife Faye were lured away from the harsh Manitoba winters to warmer climes in the Niagara area. The Cantina was sold and demolished to make way for a new home construction. The final Cantina jam band line-up consisted of Ken, Ken Storie, Doug Matthews, Jon Felgueiras, and myself. The five compadres gathered to raise a glass and boogie the night away for one last time. The closing of the old Cantina was, in some ways, akin to losing a bandmate and Sue-On and I have lost so many of our band pals over the years: Barry Forman, Alan Jones, Mick Sandbrook, Russ Gurr, John Skinner, Ian Hunter, Paul Duckers . . . and so many more that we met in passing.

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### Keeping the Drums Alive

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Sue-On has suffered a bit from the decades of drumming. Sore hands, arms, shoulders, etc. are the price that many drummers pay -- especially those who take pride in whalloping out a heavy backbeat. In recent years she has been spelled off more and more by some of our music buddies, but usually by our son Robin, who can fill in on drums or bass. She's found it pretty hard to give up percussion entirely, though. This was obvious when I saw her eyes light up when she discovered an exercise program called DRUMS ALIVE. A search of YouTube shows how popular this fitness activity is around the world. No drums are needed. . . only sticks and an exercise ball on a riser. . . and of course, recorded music.

Sue-On has led these classes in a variety of halls, gyms and churches, but mostly in the REACTIVE MASSAGE facilities -- our son Ja-On's massage studio in downtown Brandon. I tag along as a roadie to help set up the balls and play a variety of old-time rock 'n' roll hits -- we even squeeze in a few of our own songs. The sessions are a fun way to exercise and Sue-On leads the "drummers" (most people have a secret desire to play drums <g>) through rhythmic routines which follow the music.

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### Strange Gigs

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Through the years we've played the usual venues of clubs, halls, auditoriums, military complexes and arenas, but we've also run the gamut through some rather unusual places. Some were a struggle and a challenge . . . but all were rewarding in their own unique way:

Barn Dances ~ Haylofts ~ Railway Stations and Platforms ~ University and School Gyms and Auditoriums ~ Pubs, Bars, Beverage Rooms ~ Ballrooms in Luxury and not-so-luxury hotels ~ TV and Radio Studios ~ Remotes in Trade Buildings and

Fairgrounds ~ Midways ~ University Dining Halls and Classrooms ~ Chinese Laundries ~ Chinese Restaurant Show Hall ~ Auditoriums ~ Telethon Locations ~ Country Halls ~ Arenas ~ Clubs and Messes in Military Bases in Canada and UK (all ranks) ~ Golf Clubhouses ~ Aircraft Hangars ~ Highway Service Stations ~ Karate Dojos ~ Agriculture Research Centre grounds for HRH Princess Anne ~ Shopping Malls ~ Casinos ~ Hospitals and Personal Care Homes ~ Service Club Rooms ~ Churches ~ Flatbeds ~ Parade Floats ~ Exhibition Grandstands ~ Stadiums ~ Bandshells ~ Rodeo Stages ~ Military H-Huts ~ Horse Barns ~ Car Dealer Show Rooms and Outdoor Car Lots ~ Dance Studios ~ Roller Rinks ~ Parks and Gardens ~ Paddlewheel River Boats ~ Outdoor Indian Pow-Wow Stages ~ Mud Baths ~ Church Masses Indoors and On Outside Stages ~ Stage set up in the middle of Winnipeg's Portage Avenue ~ UK Workingman Clubs ~ Jam Clubs made of Straw Bales ~ Little Saskatchewan River Underwater Video Shoot ~ Huge English BBQ Barns ~ Malaysian Rainforest ~ Historic Forts ~ California High Desert Resorts ~ Hayracks ~ Chemical Test Plots in Grain Fields ~ Theatres ~ UK Discos ~ Chicago Blues Shacks ~ Jails: Male and Female ~ Maximum Security Penitentiary ~ German Army Stag Club ~ Outdoor Log Stage Complex ~ Bull Ring Amphitheatre ~ Classic Pantages Theatre ~ Atomic Energy Complex ~ Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature ~ Fibreglass Manufacturing Plant (Macdonald's, canoes, etc.) ~ Reactive Massage Studio ~ On Sandy Beaches of Lake Winnipeg ~ Whiskey Distillery Warehouses ~ Oktoberfest Big Top Tents ~ Retractable Stage over Hotel Swimming Pools . . . Recording Studios: 1. Portable Unit in Grain Exchange Building, 2. Converted Masonic Lodge, 3. Underground Coal Bin in Soho London, 4. Above a Newcastle Bingo Hall/Historic Vaudeville Theatre, 5. Durham UK Converted Row Houses . . . all of these in addition to a bevy of "normal" gigs -- many of which are described elsewhere in this Gig Notes series.



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*Gig Notes X: Trials and Triumphs on the Trail*  
**SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES**

Related features with expanded notes and photos  
that we've created on our main site:

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[Sun Records](#)

[Bobby Curtola](#)

[Barry Forman Remembered](#)

[Russ Gurr Remembered](#)

[Mick Sandbrook Remembered](#)

[Chinese Pavilion - Westman Winterfest](#)

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[Malaysia / Singapore Adventure](#)

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