

## Additional Research Material for AMB Part Eight

What is going on with Gibson Banjos? By John Lawless | July 16, 2013

This article found on the internet: <http://bluegrasstoday.com/>

Long before Les Paul started thinking about solid body electric guitars, the Gibson company – then located in Kalamazoo, MI – was known as one of the premier makers of banjos in the US. They provided tenors for the explosion of popularity in that style of banjo in the early 1900s, and their Mastertone models from the 1930s through the early '40s serve as the standard of excellence by which all modern banjos are measured.

But since the flooding of the Cumberland River in Nashville ravaged their production facilities in May of 2010, Gibson has not assembled or shipped a single banjo. Nor have they been willing to discuss the status of banjo building in their future plans.

Halting production in the wake of the flooding is easily understood. The Nashville shop, located just by the banks of the Cumberland near the Grand Ole Opry House, was completely destroyed by the flood. Both the showroom and the assembly areas had several feet of water sloshing around. Parts and tools were floating on the surface, with ruined machinery below. It was deemed irrecoverable, and the site was abandoned with banjo and mandolin luthiers sent to work in other Nashville production facilities.

Numerous calls and emails to Gibson for comment since have been met with stony silence. Existing dealers have only been told (for the past 3 years) that no banjo production is expected each year. One call to the main Gibson customer service line verified this fact, and that no banjos have been shipped since the flood.

It seems a fair question to ask: what is going on with Gibson Banjos?



The demise of their 5-strings was not only a shock to the dealers who represented them, but very nearly caused the collapse of First Quality Music in Louisville, who had been manufacturing the Gibson banjo components for some time. The Sullivan family had tooled up substantially to support this production, and it accounted for nearly half their annual revenue when it disappeared in a flash after the flood. First Quality has since restructured, and have survived the financial jolt by refocusing their efforts on their own Sullivan Banjo line, and the Derby City turkey calls they make from scrap neck wood.

Gibson mandolins, which had been made in the same shop at Opry Mills destroyed by flood waters, have recently resumed production, but no word whatsoever has been offered where banjos are concerned. The Gibson web site still shows several banjo models listed, but only their Asian import series by Epiphone is available for sale.

Is it possible that the company whose banjos are so intimately enmeshed with bluegrass music is abandoning their production forever? It seems that the banjo lovers, dealers and collectors who have supported Gibson these many years deserve an answer to that question at the very least.

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### **Cowboy Jack Clement obituary**

Article in *Bluegrass Today*. By Daniel Mullins| August 9, 2013 |



One of the most influential men in the history of American music has passed away. Primarily known for his work in country music, Cowboy Jack Clement's influence runs the gamut including country, rock and roll, folk, bluegrass, and more. A true renaissance man, "Cowboy" (as he was affectionately known) was as a songwriter, record producer, performer, singer, movie producer, dance instructor, and one of the most unique personalities the entertainment industry has ever known.

Cowboy made a name for himself working for Sam Phillips at Sun Records. It is there he discovered Jerry Lee Lewis, developed a young Johnny Cash, and worked with such artists as Roy Orbison, Charlie Rich, and Carl Perkins. Upon leaving Sun, Cowboy became a titan in the country music industry. He helped a young African American named Charley Pride become a country music star during the civil rights movement, aiding in his signing with RCA and producing thirteen of his albums. He also discovered Don Williams and helped Don make country's first music video.

He produced records for some of the biggest names in music.

- Waylon Jennings
- Louis Armstrong
- Eddy Arnold
- John Prine
- Jerry Lee Lewis
- Charlie Rich
- Bobby Bare
- U2
- Tompall Glaser & The Glaser Brothers
- Roy Orbison
- Townes Van Zandt
- Johnny Cash
- Emmylou Harris

His songwriting credits include some of country's biggest hits.

- *Guess Things Happen That Way*
- *I Know One*
- *Just Someone I Used To Know*
- *The Ballad Of A Teenage Queen*
- *California Girl And The Tennessee Square*
- *Miller's Cave*
- *Dirty Old Egg-Sucking Dog*
- *Just Between You And Me*
- *The One On The Right Is On The Left*
- *It'll Be Me*
- *Let's All Help The Cowboy Sing The Blues*

Cowboy has many ties to bluegrass music as well. Before working at Sun Records, he had a bluegrass band in the D.C. area with Buzz Busby (Buzz & Jack and The Bayou Boys). Throughout the years, he was often seen playing his mandolin, usually while humming and dancing. Cowboy also produced albums for bluegrass hall-of-famer's Doc Watson, Mac Wiseman, and John Hartford.

Stories about Cowboy are some of the music industry's greatest urban legends. One of my favorites comes from the liner notes of Johnny Cash's album, *Gone Girl*. One of Cash's dearest friends, Cowboy wrote the title track and played guitar on the album. The liner notes consist merely of Cash recounting a night in New York City with Jack Clement, June Carter, and Jan Howard. Here is an excerpt.

"Then old Jack started singing *Gone Girl* to the cab driver, and we all joined in. We didn't pay him when we got to the Lone Star [Cafe] 'cause we knew we'd not stay long and we just had him wait. We had a table somewhere in the back of the room where they sat us with

another couple who had ordered fried potatoes. Jack had some of their fried potatoes and told the girl that she was making a mistake going with that guy. Then we left.

“You must believe in magic,” said Jack to the cab driver.

“I’ll never forget this night as long as I live,” said the driver.

Now ole Jack sang *Gone Girl* out the window to his fellow Americans in New York City.

Nobody applauded, but everyone was interested.

Unfortunately, I was never able to meet Cowboy Jack, although I’ve long been an admirer. His wit and unique outlook on life were awe-inspiring. Particularly after watching the only documentary on Cowboy Jack Clement (*Shakespeare Was A Big George Jones Fan* – greatest movie title EVER!), I got the impression that Cowboy Jack is what we all want to be, but he’s the only person who ever figured out how.

As a kid, I had never known much about Jack Clement other than the fact that he helped write and produce many of Cash’s Sun recordings. One day, I got a new Cash documentary (*Johnny Cash’s America* to be exact). The first thing I said to my dad after watching this great documentary on Cash’s impact on American culture was, “Dad, who’s Jack Clement?” Of course he was curious as to why I was asking. It was because the portions of the film when Jack was speaking were the most interesting. Honestly, I can’t remember one thing Jack said, but all of his interview portions were done with his shirt off while in his swimming pool!

Ever since then, I’ve been trying to answer that question: “Who’s Jack Clement?” The more I know about him, the more I realize I don’t think that question can ever be answered.

Jack Clement produced the album *Two Days In November* for Doc & Merle Watson. He also wrote the liner notes. Along with crediting the musicians and engineers, he credits himself for running the lights...



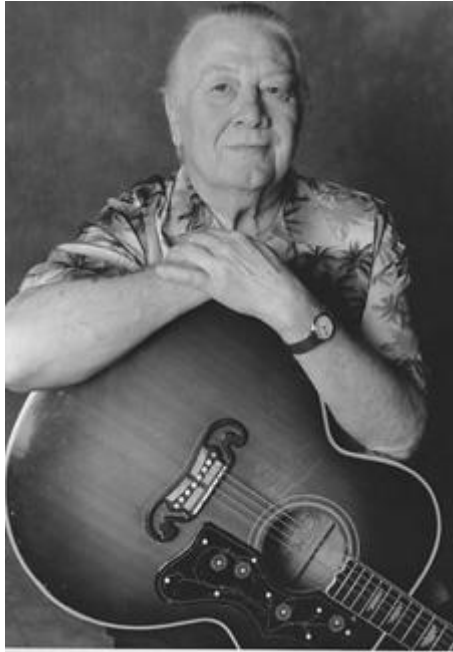
Jack Clement has scored major musical success as a songwriter, producer, recording studio pioneer, publisher, artist and executive. He was born April 5, 1931, in Whitehaven, Tenn., near Memphis and enlisted in the Marines as a teenager. After four years of service, he toured in a bluegrass band, then returned to Memphis in 1954. He found work at Sun Records and worked at the mixing board for recording sessions with Roy Orbison, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Charlie Rich and Jerry Lee Lewis. Another Sun artist, Elvis Presley, even opened for Clement at the Memphis club The Eagle's Nest.

In those years, he wrote two of Cash's most enduring songs, "Ballad of a Teenage Queen" and "Guess Things Happen That Way."

After being fired by Sam Phillips at Sun, he moved to Nashville to work for Chet Atkins, then relocated to Beaumont, Texas. There, he met George Jones and convinced him to cut the song, "She Thinks I Still Care." In 1965, Clement returned to Nashville and financed a demo by then-unknown Charley Pride and persuaded Atkins to sign him to RCA. Clement also wrote Pride's first two hits, "Just Between You and Me" and "I Know One," and produced Pride's first 13 albums for the label.

Clement launched the solo career of Don Williams through his JMI record label, a project that also introduced Allen Reynolds as a record producer. Reynolds later produced Garth Brooks, Crystal Gayle, Emmylou Harris, Bobby Bare and Kathy Mattea. In addition, Clement was

Townes Van Zandt's first publisher, and Bob McDill also wrote for Clement's publishing company. Clement released his own album, *All I Want to Do in Life* in 1978.



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Beyond country music, Clement produced three tracks for U2's *Rattle and Hum* sessions in Memphis and also produced an album for Louis Armstrong. In other ventures, he built four of Nashville's leading studios, produced a cult classic horror film and made perhaps the world's first music video on Don Williams in 1972, nine years before MTV launched.

Clement now operates out of his spacious Nashville home -- with a fully equipped studio upstairs, a pool in the side yard, hammock out back and all the rooms wired for filming.

### **Bobby Slone: A Bluegrass Life** by Richard Thompson | Bluegrass Today. August 15, 2013 |



Bobby Slone was born June 13, 1936, in Pike County, Kentucky, and passed away on Monday, August 12, due to rectal cancer.

A left hander, Robert “Bobby” Slone was an important member of one of the most influential modern bluegrass bands: J.D. Crowe and the New South. Slone and Crowe began playing together in the summer of 1964; Slone was a fiddle player initially. They worked at Martin’s Place, the Red Slipper Lounge (at the Holiday Inn) and private parties in and around Lexington, Kentucky.



Prior to the New South, Crowe had formed the Kentucky Mountain Boys. They recorded three LPs, *Bluegrass Holiday* (Lemco LLP-609), *Ramblin’ Boy* (Lemco LLP-610) – also released with the title *Blackjack* (Rebel REB-CD-1583) - and *The Model Church* (Lemco LLP-611) Slone played bass on these albums.

In 1971 Crowe changed the name of his band to the New South and after some changes in personnel, he had a core group of Tony Rice (guitar), Bobby Slone (bass) and Ricky Skaggs (mandolin, fiddle and viola), with Crowe playing the banjo.

Four years later J.D. Crowe and the New South released an album – the seminal Rounder 0044, by which it is universally known – that has been for very many the inspirational gold standard for those of that generation and for those that followed.

Slone made two tours of Japan with the New South, one in the autumn of 1975 and then again in the spring of 1979, during both of which Slone played fiddle as well as bass (although not at the same time). Recordings from both tours were released on Japanese LPs.



Bobby Slone was with J.D. Crowe for 24 years, the longest tenure of any musician who ever worked with him. Prior to that Slone taught himself to play the guitar – upside down – and then the fiddle. At the age of 13 he joined the Kentucky Ramblers working on Pikeville’s Radio WLSI before he moved to Bristol, Virginia, where he played with Buster Pack and the Lonesome Pine Boys on WCYB’s *Farm and Fun Time*.

Then for several years he worked in Chicago, playing Country music and Western Swing, before he moved to California where he returned to bluegrass music as a member of the Golden State Boys.

In 1962 Slone joined the Kentucky Colonels with whom he stayed for a year and a half, playing bass. During that time he participated in the recording of the LP *Appalachian Swing!* (World Pacific WP 1821) and is featured on *Livin’ In The Past - Legendary Live Recordings* (Briar SBR-4202).

From 1989 Slone quit long distance [travel](#) and spent the ensuing period playing fiddle as a staff musician at Renfro Valley Entertainment Center.

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A Note from Cliff Waldron about Mike Auldridge. 2013

Hi Barry,

Sorry, for being so slow in getting back to you. Mike Auldridge goes all the way back to Emerson & Waldron days. These dates I’m giving you may not be exact but close its been a few years.

Mike joined E&W I’d say late 1968 or early 1969. He stayed with us until Emerson left and joined The Country Gents. in 1970 I think. He continued with my group until 1972 and then joined The Seldom Scene. We first met when Emerson and I were working The Red Fox Inn in Bethesda, MD 1968. He was a great musician! I will say during those years was a learning and experiencing time for all of us as we tried out new music trying to make it fit into Bluegrass without going to far out. I think it was a plus for Mike to have to come up with new ideas. I remember when he first started with us he was a Josh Graves fan as everyone else who played the Dobro, back then Josh’s style was the standard. I hope this will help you out.

I don’t have any biography of me handy , but if you go to Google, type in my name you can find several there.

Any questions let me know.

God Bless, Cliff      October 4, 2013



Bill and Caroline Monroe lived here at 1208 Fillmore Street in Raleigh during 1937 as Jan Johansson discovered below.



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**Ramblin' Tommy 'Doc' Scott passes.** by Richard Thompson | *Bluegrass Today*. October 9, 2013



Tommy Scott, who worked to the self-applied motif as America's Last Real Medicine Show, passed away on Monday, September 30th of complications following injuries sustained in an automobile accident on August 10th. He was 96 years old.

Born in Stephens County, in the Blue Ridge foothills of Georgia, on June 24, 1917, Scott was taught to play the guitar by a neighbor. He began playing at church socials, dances and on local radio – WAIM, in nearby Anderson, South Carolina – with his sister Cleo at the age of 16. This led to his first job, working for 'Doc' M.F. Chamberlain's Medicine Show and so began a life as a traveling showman that lasted six decades.

After two years of touring the South, Chamberlain passed all interest in his show over to Scott; these included the medicine formulas for the laxative Herb-O-Lac, also called Man-O-Ree and Katona, and a liniment that Scott sold as Snake Oil.

He was a member of various medicine shows working on radio stations in Greensboro, Greenville and Raleigh, wherein during 1938 he had a position on WPTF radio.

The following year he was hired as a member of Charlie Monroe's Kentucky Pardners, appearing as Rambling Scotty on Wheeling's WWVA.

Another band member was John R 'Curly' Seckler, who would become a partner and life-long friend. The duo worked on WRDW Augusta, Georgia, and WSPA Spartanburg, South Carolina, sponsored by Vim-Herb Tonic, where they were known as Ramblin' Scotty and Smilin' Bill.



A freak snowstorm destroyed their tent show and the duo split (although they would reunite for recordings). Scott went back to playing the medicine shows.

Later he spent a year at WSM Nashville and he worked on the *Grand Ole Opry*. He crafted a ventriloquist dummy that he named Luke McLuke and incorporated into his show along with some blackface comedy.

For the next decade Tommy Scott toured extensively, typically using various radio stations as a base and employing his wife, Frankie, and daughter Sandra. At the same time he acquired a long-time band member in Gaines Blevins and Blevins' son Scotty Lee.

In 1946 Scott filmed over 50 quarter-hour television shows, the *Ramblin' Tommy Scott Show*, putting him ahead of his time in this respect. The cast included Sally Ann Forrester, Ray Aldridge and Jimmy and Jenny Vance and the show featured singing, dancing and classic country comedy. He also appeared in a western film *Trail of the Hawk* and made a few movie shorts. Later he appeared in *Mountain Capers*, *Hillbilly Harmony*, *Southern Hayride*.

Scott recorded for several labels, including Bullet, 4 Star, Macy's, Rich-R-Tone, his own Katona label and, predominantly, King Records. Although he didn't have any hits, the recordings stand as good examples of mainstream country music of the late 1940s and 1950s.



Scott composed his most popular song of the late 1940s *Rosebuds and You* in honor of his long-time stage and film and TV co-star Frankie. The song became a regional hit in the South and west in 1950; it was later covered by dozens of artists including Country Music Hall of Famer George Morgan, the Willis Brothers, and Red Sovine. The late fiddler Benny Martin had a version of *Rosebuds and You* that reached *Billboard's* Top 20 in 1963.

Scott also wrote the minor bluegrass classic *You Are the Rainbow of My Dreams* (as recorded by Charlie Bailey and Lester Flatt), and contributed to the multi-million selling pop song *Mule Train*, to which he sold his rights. *You Took My Sunshine*, *You Can't Stop Time*, *Gonna Paint the Town Red*, *Tennessee*, *Rockin' and Rollin'*, *Elly Mae* and *Pollution* are among the more than 500 songs that he penned.

He returned to television in the 1950s with Tommy Scott's *Smokey Mountain Jamboree* running in syndication around the country with appearances by Grand Ole Opry stars Curley Williams and the John Daniel Quartet. Their portion of the show is the earliest historical film footage featuring a Southern gospel quartet.

Among his other early television appearances was one with young talk show host Johnny Carson, and he later appeared with almost every major journalist, talk or variety show personality in the U.S. and Canada including Walter Cronkite, Oprah Winfrey, Ralph Emery and David Letterman. He made multiple appearances for *Entertainment Tonight*, *The Tommy Hunter Show* and *The Today Show*.

As live radio work almost vanished, Scott increased the amount of time that he spent on the road. Often he would exceed 350 days, traveling all over the US and Canada. To broaden the appeal of his show he would, at various times, add old-time movie heroes, such as Tim McCoy,

Johnnie Mack Brown and Sunset Carson, to his entourage. At other times Scott employed Bill and Wilma Millsaps, and Clyde Moody, another friend from the early days.



By the late 1970s he began to emphasize the medicine show element and, although 'Doc' Scott's *Last Real Old Time Medicine Show* became a parody of the original format, he gained some recognition as a cultural preservationist. Patrons bought the specially bottled "snake oil" as souvenirs.

It was at this time that Scott, wearing his trademark colorful clothes, red top hat and snake skinned shoes, endeared himself to millions of fans around the world.

In more recent years he reduced the number of shows from 300 to 150 by the mid-1990s. He continued to make records, getting together with Moody and Seckler for this purpose.

Interest in his early recordings prompted Cattle Records to re-issue three albums and Old Homestead released one featuring radio shows from 1941 that featured Seckler.

Scott is the subject of two documentaries for PBS; one in 1980 focused on his performance career in the 1960s and 1970s, and the other, *Still Ramblin'*, in 2001, highlighted his early years in film and country music.



Curly Seckler remembers his friend. *"Tommy was a good fellow and a good showman. I first met him in 1939 when we both worked for Charlie Monroe at WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia. We got together again in 1941 in Anderson, South Carolina. We have stayed close friends ever since, through good times and bad. I will miss him."*

Scott was honored by the Country Music Association Walkway of Stars in 1976 and, in 2011, as an International Bluegrass Music Museum Legend. He is a member of the Atlanta Country Music Hall of Fame and was the subject of a major exhibition at the Georgia Music Hall of Fame from 1996-2008.

'Doc' Tommy Scott was laid to rest on October 4, 2013, in his home town Toccoa, Georgia.

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**Jim Shumate has passed.** John Lawless | *Bluegrass Today* October 10, 2013



Legendary bluegrass fiddler Jim Shumate has died at 91 years of age.

As a young man, he served as a member of Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys in the early 1940s, just prior to the addition of Flatt & Scruggs to the band. When Lester and Earl split from Monroe in '48, Jim played fiddle on their first recording session, which produced *We'll Meet Again Sweetheart* and *Cabin in Caroline*.

In his instructional video on The Fiddlers of Flatt & Scruggs, Ron Stewart describes the playing on those two cuts as the two most classic bluegrass fiddle breaks of all time. "I believe that Jimmy was a genius bluegrass fiddler, and way ahead of his time. He had a style all his own that I've never heard since, which just defines bluegrass fiddle for me, and the feel it should have."

Jim had been suffering from kidney failure and Alzheimers, and took a fall on Tuesday after becoming quite ill on Monday. He was taken to the hospital and transferred to hospice care. He died around 1:00 a.m. this morning near his home in Hickory, NC.

His wife Naomi and their two daughters are meeting today with Bass Smith Funeral Home in Hickory, and an announcement about arrangements and memorials will be forthcoming.





James Fred 'Jim' Shumate grew up hearing the sounds of his uncle playing fiddle at a neighboring farm and as his wife Naomi said, "He picked up the fiddle when he was a boy and hasn't put it down."

Born on Chestnut Mountain, Pisgah National Forest, North Carolina, on October 21, 1921, Shumate taught himself to play the fiddle as a young boy and he pioneered innovations that are still admired and studied by musicians today.

As well as listening to uncle, he heard the Grand Ole Opry's premier fiddler of the time, Arthur Smith, who emphasized the "long-bow" style, playing plenty of double stops and bluesy slides. "I tried my best to play just like Arthur," Shumate is quoted as saying.

Shumate won his first contest when he was fourteen years old. As a young man, Shumate went to work in a furniture factory in Hickory, North Carolina, but he was soon playing on the local radio station WHKY with Don Walker and the Blue Ridge Boys.

Quite by chance, Bill Monroe was driving in the neighborhood, and he happened to tune in to the show and heard Shumate fiddling. A little while later Monroe invited Shumate to join his Blue Grass Boys to replace Chubby Wise, who left in April 1945.

Shumate didn't stay with Monroe for very long as by December 1945 'Howdy' Forrester had returned from the Navy to reclaim his job. However, Shumate got to play on the Grand Ole Opry and to make a very significant contribution to the history of the Blue Grass Boys and bluegrass music in a wider sense by introducing Monroe to a young banjo player, Earl Scruggs.

He didn't do any recordings in the few months while with the Blue Grass Boys, but he did help to write "The Old Country Baptizing," the Gospel quartet song that Monroe recorded in May 1962.

For a week in the spring of 1948 Shumate provided some relief for the Stanley Brothers, who were between fiddlers.



When Flatt and Scruggs formed the Foggy Mountain Boys later in that same year, they hired Shumate as their fiddler. He participated in their first recording session, playing on "Cabin in Caroline" and "Someday We'll Meet Again Sweetheart."

To complete a very hectic year Shumate outplayed some of the country's best fiddlers to win the National Fiddlers Convention in Richlands, Virginia, giving him the permanent title of Master Fiddler.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Shumate tired of life on the road so he returned to Hickory and to work as a furniture salesman. However, he continued to perform and record when time allowed. He performed at the first MerleFest in 1988, returning in 2005 to play along with other former members of Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys.

As one of the pioneers of bluegrass music, Shumate appeared on a TNN special, Grass Roots to Bluegrass, in 1999 which highlighted the originators of bluegrass music.



Over the years, Shumate has recorded old bluegrass standards as well as his own original tunes. In 1980 he recorded 13 tunes with the Blue River Boys; released on the Anvil label, “Bluegrass Fiddle Supreme” (RSR 1152).

Shumate was more active in the 1990s doing five sessions in Galax’s Heritage Studio, one of which realized a ten track cassette “Tribute to Bill Monroe.” All of his recordings are included in “The Jim Shumate Collection (Volume 1 and 2)” available through Heritage Records in Galax, Virginia.

During his last few years Shumate was honored with several awards, induction into the in the Bluegrass Hall of Fame (then in Nashville, Tennessee), the North Carolina Folk Heritage Award (1995), and induction into the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame (2011). However, the most significant would have to be the simple recognition that Shumate was responsible for the now extremely familiar fiddle kick-off, which he introduced during his time with Bill Monroe.

Jim Shumate passed away on October 10, 2013, not two weeks shy of his 92nd birthday. He had been suffering from renal failure and plagued by Alzheimer’s prior to his passing.

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**Classic Banjo – The Cliff’s Notes of Banjo History** by David Morris, found on *Bluegrass Today* October 22, 2013.



We’ve written a lot about the banjo lately at Bluegrass Today, and why not? It is one of the central pillars of the music that we love, even if the instrument and those who play it are the butt of a seemingly endless string of jokes.

If, like me, you love how great banjo picking can elevate a song, or if you’re curious to learn more about banjo styles and banjo history, “Classic Banjo” from Smithsonian Folkways is a must-have CD.

In the grand style of just about everything having to do with the Smithsonian, “Classic Banjo” is more than entertainment. With 30 songs and a sweeping 44-page booklet, it’s a reference work that you can dip into repeatedly.

The songs are plucked from banjo recordings in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections at the Smithsonian’s Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Most are studio renditions but some of the songs are field recordings. (Not to get political here, but imagine what we might be missing if, during some budget debate decades ago, Ralph Rinzler had been deemed “non-essential.”)

All styles of banjo picking (including clawhammer, frailing and Scruggs style) are represented and a wide range of music is sampled (blues, jazz, Irish, folk and, of course, bluegrass.)

Also here: Many of the pickers who would constitute a Who’s Who of Banjo in America, if there were such an animal. Here are just a few: Snuffy Jenkins, Dock Boggs, Pete Seeger, Bill Keith, Roni Stoneman, Tony Trischka and Bill Evans. You’ll notice one glaring omission. Earl Scruggs is not represented as a player, though he is referenced several times in the booklet.

For instance, here’s what the liner notes say about “Sally Ann,” a recording by Snuffy Jenkins from the 1956 album “American Banjo Tunes and Songs in Scruggs Style”: “Scruggs popularized the three-finger picking style that caught on with bluegrass fans and young folk song enthusiasts, and while many thought the style originated with him, it did not.” Jenkins, the booklet notes, was one of Earl’s influences.

I'd prefer that he be represented by more than words. It's the equivalent of a survey of American cooking that leaves out a recipe from Julia Child but mentions her in passing in a footnote. But that's perhaps the only flaw in this grand collection.

In addition to "Sally Ann," standout tracks include "Gut Bucket Blues," a Louis Armstrong composition with Don Vappie on a six-string banjo; "Foggy Mountain Top" with Ola Belle Reed on banjo and vocals; and "Bluegrass Breakdown." That last one is a 1964 recording by Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys, featuring Bill Keith on the five-string. There's a bit of bluegrass lore on this one. Bill Monroe introduces his banjo man as "Brad" Keith because, of course, there could only be one Bill in Bill's band!

In short, this fine collection is anything you want it to be. If you want a quick take on the banjo in American music, spend a pleasant hour or so listening through these 30 selections. It can be your Cliff's Notes guide. On the other hand, if you want to fully immerse yourself in all things banjo, you can follow these songs back to the original recordings, read through the original sources that are cited here and make it, as Ralph Rinzler did, your life's work. Either way, this collection belongs in the collection of anyone interested in the banjo or in traditional American music.

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### **A Note from Byron Berline**

Aloha Byron,

I've been pouring through your book, looking for the tidbits which you put in there just for me. I found them! I went straight for the parts where you met the Dillard's and Mr. Bill and those events. Fascinating! I also found your OU and Army experiences of great interest. Thanks for including these, too.

You probably don't know this but I have Oklahoma roots. I may even be part Choctaw but I can't prove it. I wrote to the Choctaw Nation but they were unable to match me up with my grandfather whom I was told married an Indian. Unfortunately, I couldn't trace my genealogy back that far.

My mom was born in Comanche, OK. Dad was born in Alex and raised in Anadarko. Dad graduated from Oklahoma A & M in Stillwater. They met in Los Angeles while Dad was a young Ensign in the Navy.

I attended Southeastern Oklahoma State University after I got out of the Air Force. I finished up my degree in aviation in December of 1973 there in Durant. I recall the tornados which originated in Ardmore and moved eastward. And a rain shower so thick that I couldn't see 10 feet in front of my car. Ah yes. Good old Oklahoma weather. My uncle in Tulsa took me ice fishing in Tulsa one night. Didn't care for that much. Too cold.

A couple questions come to mind:

1. Did you find that Bill Monroe's rhythm was different than what you'd been raised with? And how did Bill react to your style compared to the formal training which Richard Greene had?

2. You mentioned to me that you brought Texas Fiddling to Bill's band. I'd love to hear more about this.

3. I'm told that the fancy Texas fiddling was not appropriate at Missoula or Weiser because it was not "traditional enough." Did you have to temper your style to compete?

Anyhow, Byron, thanks for your book. It will be an important part of bluegrass history.

Your Hawaiian pal, Barry

Hello Barry,

I am glad you are enjoying my book. I didn't realize you had those Okla. ties. To answer your questions well playing with Bill wasn't too different for me as I had been playing some bluegrass with some groups and listening a lot to Bills records. I don't think Richard Green's name came up much when I was with Bill of course I knew a lot more old time fiddle tunes than Richard did and Bill loved to sit around and play those old tunes. About bringing Texas fiddling to Bills band I think other folks have decided that is what happened. I did play somewhat of the Tx. style but in Bill's band you didn't swing the notes. Mainly because of his rhythm wouldn't allow it to be truthful. If swing chords were playing then I would automatically start swinging but that never happen in Bill's music. I essentially played the same notes like in Sally Goodin but never did swing it like the Tx. fiddlers do.

As far as the contests in Montana or Weiser there might have been some complaints about the Tx. style but it didn't last long. When I first arrived in Weiser in 1962 there were fiddlers who played mostly jigs and reels. After '62 that started to change. More fiddlers from different parts of the country started to attend and now it is almost strictly Tx. style gone wild. I never changed my style to please the contest rules or judges. They either liked it or they didn't and I guess they liked it. It was interesting for me to get to judge Weiser in 2010. It had been 40 years since I had been there which was my last contest to ever enter by the way. It was evident that I am now one of the old guys. I used to see and compete with the old guys and now I am the old guy. Yikes!!

Anyway, enjoy the new year and stay in touch.

Byron Berline 121 E. Oklahoma, Guthrie, Ok. 73044 405-282-6646 doublestop.com

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### **A Tribute to Pete Seeger (1919-2014) by Jeff Place**

Pete Seeger was a giant of our time. Growing up in a musical family, he had a long and productive career as a folk song leader and social activist. His father was the musicologist Charles Seeger, and his mother Constance was a classical violinist. At one point during his youth, Seeger and his brothers traveled with their parents in a wagon, entertaining communities throughout the countryside. When he was sixteen, he accompanied his father to Bascom Lamar Lunsford's folk festival in Asheville, North Carolina. It is there that he first encountered the banjo and fell in love with it.

He went to Harvard hoping to become a journalist, but did not find what he was looking for there. In 1938, he settled in New York City and eventually met Alan Lomax, Woody Guthrie, Aunt Molly Jackson, Lead Belly, and others. The quality of music coming from this group immediately captured his attention. He assisted Alan Lomax at the Library of Congress' Archive of Folk Song and was exposed to a wonderful array of traditional American music. Many in this group of musicians eventually formed the Almanac Singers in 1940. In addition to Pete, the group included Lee Hays, Woody Guthrie, Bess Lomax, Sis Cunningham, Mill Lampell, Arthur Stern, and others. They lived in a communal home, "The Almanac House," in New York. The group performed for gatherings, picket lines, and any place where they could lend their voices in support of the social causes they believed in. Later, after World War II, many of the same people became involved in the musical organizations People's Songs and People's Artists.

In 1943, Seeger recorded in New York during a production of Earl Robinson's Lonesome Train. While recording, he stopped by Moses Asch's little studio and recorded several Spanish Civil War songs for his first acetate discs on Moses Asch's record label. This was the beginning of a very long and prolific relationship between the two men.

In 1949, Pete Seeger began to perform with three other musicians: his old partner Lee Hays, who had a booming bass voice, Fred Hellerman on guitar and vocals, and Ronnie Gilbert, a young woman with a soaring voice. They called themselves The Weavers. Oddly for Seeger, The Weavers began to perform in nightclubs wearing formal attire. They had lovely arrangements of American folk songs, many written by old friends such as Lead Belly and Woody Guthrie. Some of their more popular songs were "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," "It Takes a Worried Man," "Wimoweh," and "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine." But none were more popular than the double sided 78 rpm hit "Goodnight Irene," which was learned from Lead Belly, and Hebrew folk song "Tzena Tzena Tzena." These tunes reached number one and number two, respectively, on the hit parade in 1950.

Later that same year, the book Red Channels appeared. In the anti-Communist hysteria that followed World War II, Red Channels accused well-known Americans, mostly from the arts, entertainment, and journalism fields, of being communists. Seeger's name appeared in the book and very soon afterward The Weavers' television program was cancelled, as were many of their performances. Thus began a seventeen year period where Pete Seeger was forced to operate as a blacklisted musician. As late as 1967, when the blacklist had mostly faded, Seeger still had difficulty getting on network television.

Many of the members of the New York folk music scene were suspected of harboring communist sympathies. Pete watched as one-by-one his friends and colleagues were called before the House of Un-American Activities Committee. Membership in groups like People's Songs was bound to get you subpoenaed. Finally, on August 14, 1955, it was Pete's turn. When queried by the committee, he refused to answer any questions about his political beliefs, stating that "these are very improper questions for any American to be asked" (Dunaway: 213). His uncooperative testimony made it likely that he would be charged with numerous counts of contempt of congress. This eventually transpired in July 1956, and was followed by an indictment in 1957. The trial came much later, hanging over Seeger's head for the rest of the decade.

Unable to ply his trade in the most lucrative locations and travel without scrutiny, Seeger's music went underground. This became a period of explosive energy and creativity. Biographer David King Dunaway notes that from 1954 to 1958, Seeger released six LPs per year (Dunaway: 218). During the blacklist, Seeger supported his family by constant traveling, playing small venues, releasing numerous albums, producing documentary films, and authoring a fairly popular book on how to play the 5-string banjo.

Moses Asch, who in 1948 had started his Folkways label, was an old friend and supporter. He couldn't have cared less about the blacklist. During the 50s and 60s, Folkways published dozens of Pete's records. While the blacklists were worried about Seeger singing before Middle America on the television, radio, or in nightclubs, his children's records were entertaining a new generation of youngsters in schools and summer camps, where he was also known to make appearances. His great children's albums from this period remain best sellers today, including his own story Abiyoyo. His series American Favorite Ballads taught a whole generation of young Americans the great American folk songs that Seeger himself had learned.

Many of the young people who heard Seeger in the 1950s became the leaders of the “folk song revival” which began later that decade. Musicians like the Kingston Trio’s Dave Guard were inspired to take up music. It is unfortunate that as the “folk revival” peaked and young groups were landing lucrative record contracts, the man who started them out was blacklisted. During this time, the major music businesses took full advantage of the blacklist by cashing in on appropriation. There was even a network television show called “Hootenanny” that would not allow Seeger to perform—the very man who, along with Woody Guthrie, had introduced the public to the word “hootenanny.”

As part of a campaign to arrange shows for Pete, his manager Harold Leventhal coordinated what he called “Pete Seeger Community Concerts.” These were intended to “present Pete to an audience outside the confines of the metropolitan area of New York under the auspices of various community groups” (flyer, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections). Seeger played dozens and dozens of college “gigs,” which he later noted as “some of [his] most important work” (*The Power of Song*). Without much notice, he would arrive in a college town, do an interview on the college station, play the show, and be gone before the anti-Seeger protesters could organize a rally against him. During 1958 and 1959, leading up to a 1960 concert at Bowdoin College in Maine, he performed in Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Minnesota. In the early 1960s, Pete play concerts around the world, entertaining in many countries and learning great topical songs, which he brought back to the U.S.

In March 1961, Seeger was tried on the contempt of congress charge, which resulted in conviction. He was subsequently sentenced to ten years in jail. Thankfully, in May 1962, the Court of Appeals decided that the indictment was faulty and threw out the case (Dunaway: 259). Now able to move freely and without the cloud of prison hanging over his head, Seeger began to increase his involvement in social activism, especially the African American civil rights movement. He marched in the South with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and others. He gathered at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, and participated in re-working the hymn “I Will Overcome” into the iconic anthem “We Shall Overcome.” He was also a strong voice against the Vietnam War, penning great anti-war songs like “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy” and “If You Love Your Uncle Sam (Bring ’Em Home).”

The fight to protect the environment also captured of his attention. Seeger heard the phrase “think globally, act locally” and it got him thinking about his own area around Beacon, New York (*Power of Song*). His home was on a hill over the Hudson River, which by the mid-1960s had become a festering, polluted mess. Seeger and friends built the sloop *Clearwater* and sailed up and down the river, performing and raising awareness of the problem. Ultimately, the river became cleaner and cleaner and the polluters were stopped—demonstrating what Seeger’s strong-minded perseverance could accomplish.

During the latter years of his career, Pete Seeger released the occasional album and frequently performed for any group or cause that could use his help. He always valued the idea of music as a way of bringing a community together around a common cause. His favorite concert performances were those where he led and the audience did most of the singing. In January 2009, he sang “This Land is Your Land” in front of hundreds of thousands of people on the Lincoln Memorial steps during the inauguration of Barack Obama as President of the United States. A Kennedy Center honoree, Pete Seeger has been suggested as a worthy recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2014, he was nominated for a Grammy award for Best Spoken Word

Album. His performances, recordings, and books, all leave seeds behind that grow with those who have experienced them.

In July 2013, his wife of almost seventy years, Toshi Ohta Seeger passed away. Their marriage was a true partnership. It was Toshi's organizational skills in working with Pete that allowed him to accomplish as much as he did.

Just days before his passing, he participated in the yearly celebration of Martin Luther King in Beacon, New York. Up until the very end, he was out there doing what he felt was right. His voice and presence will truly be missed.

(Portions of this text were edited and excerpted from the liner notes of Pete Seeger's The Complete Bowdoin College Concert, 1960.)

References: Dunaway, David King. 2008. How Can I Keep from Singing?: The Ballad of Pete Seeger. New York: Villard Books.

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### **Harry West passes.** John Lawless | February 14, 2014 | Bluegrass Today



Harry West, longtime co-proprietor of Harry & Jeanie West Fine Musical Instruments in Statesville, NC, died on January 25. He was 87 years old.

Their store is and has been a destination for both vintage and new bluegrass instruments for several decades now, and will continue to be operated by Jeanie and their son James.

West had been buying, selling and collecting acoustic string instruments since he was 18 years old in Asheville, NC. He and Jeanie started performing together around that same time, and they toured extensively along the eastern seaboard for the next 40 some years.

When folk music took off in the '60s, they moved their base to New York City where Harry rubbed shoulders with music royalty. He found himself jamming occasionally with Bob Dylan, and sold David Grisman his first quality mandolin during those days.



They returned home to North Carolina before long, and settled in Statesville, just north of Charlotte. The Wests were regulars at the Mountain Dance and Folk Festival in Asheville, favorites of Bascom Lamar Lunsford who organized music for this prestigious event which launched in 1928, and is still running today.

Their son James tells us that Harry started playing when he was five years old. His mom was trained as a classical violinist, but young Harry was drawn to the mandolin. The music that called to him all his life was old time Gospel and mountain ballads, which is what Harry and Jeanie performed on the road.

James said that he can recall lying in the floor as a child listening to his parents play and sing every night of his childhood. In addition to managing the store, James also plays guitar.



The Wests bought and sold instruments, initially from their home by distributing a list of inventory by mail. They placed small classified ads in bluegrass publications, and were notorious horse traders. Even when competitors started moving to marketing online in the 1990s, Harry preferred to work by phone and postal mail.

As James put it, "Dad was old school, that's all there is to it."

Their storefront is now located on East Broad Street in Statesville, a corner location where they maintain dozens of new and used banjos, mandolins and guitars in stock. They now also maintain an informative web site online.

James said that his dad had been ill this past 20 years, since suffering a stroke in 1992. He made an initial recovery after a rough couple years, followed by another stroke. His health had been progressively deteriorating since.

But even in his 80s, James said that Harry was in the store as much as he could be, which was most of the time. James and his mom will continue to manage the store as Harry left it, with no change in the name. R.I.P. Harry West.

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**James Alan Shelton remembers George Shuffler.** *Bluegrass Today* April 7, 2014 |

This remembrance is a contribution from James Alan Shelton, guitarist with Ralph Stanley & the Clinch Mountain Boys.



Today marks the passing of a true bluegrass legend and a personal guitar hero to many of us who have aspired to learn the Shuffler down-down-up crosspicking roll. At a little past noon today, George Shuffler was called up to join the Angel Band. For all of us who have tried down through the years to fill his shoes in Ralph Stanley's Clinch Mountain Boys – Larry Sparks, Keith Whitley, Ricky Lee, Renfro Proffitt, Hank Smith, Junior Blankenship and myself – we all owed a debt of gratitude to George Shuffler for showing us the way.

Folks who follow bluegrass really need to be aware of the contributions that George Shuffler made to this music. His bass playing on the Stanley Brothers' first Mercury sessions is still being talked about today and has influenced many of today's players including Tom Gray, Missy Raines and Mike Bub. Although not the first to do so, he certainly brought the flat top guitar to the public's attention as a lead instrument at a time when there weren't too many people playing lead guitar. And his crosspicking style of playing was deeply rooted in the melody, which is sadly missing from most modern guitar players. George has said many times, "If it don't have any melody in it then I don't want no part of it!"

George was the ultimate sideman. He did whatever was asked of him and more to help Carter and Ralph Stanley front a band that could compete with the other giants of their day. He was always creative in his playing. His daughter Debbie said that she had watched him at home while working out licks over and over on his guitar until he had honed them to perfection.



If you listen to his solos on those old King records it will amaze you at how many good ideas he had to make a break or a backup lick sound interesting. He always played from the heart. At various times he played lead guitar and bass in the band, plus he did a lot of bass and baritone singing in the trios and quartets.

It is a little known fact that he helped Carter write some of those wonderful songs. He said, "Oh, I'd feed him a word or two here and there," but he never asked for any songwriting credit. Two songs he specifically mentioned that he helped to write were Hallelujah I'm Ready To Go and It's A Wonderful World Outside. On top of that George and Ralph took turns driving the car all night to get them safely from one show to another.

Perhaps his greatest legacy is the way he was respected by his peers, and the way he carried himself with quiet dignity long after he left the road. George was a fine Christian man (he wanted to be in his usual seat for every service at Lakeview Baptist Church in Valdese), and remained the center of the universe to his large and loving family. His wife Sue and his children



were his pride and joy. Anyone who spent any time around George heard stories about “Momma and the kids.” Momma was his pet name for Sue. When asked how he came to raise such a close and loving family he didn’t take any credit but gave it all to Sue. He said “Aw, Momma just loved ‘em all to death!”

While sitting beside him at the record table I have seen countless people come up to him and say “Mr. Shuffler I have waited 30 years to shake your hand.” He always responded with a warm handshake, a big smile and a kind word. A lot of times they walked away with tears in their eyes. He loved his fans and he was proud of the work he had done on those old Stanley records, although he seldom talked about his accomplishments.

On a personal note, George Shuffler and the Stanley Brothers were the biggest influences on my musical career. The first time I met him was at Ralph Stanley’s Hills of Home Festival in 1986. It took me three weeks to get over that before I could talk about it without becoming emotional. Over the years, George and I became very good friends and he was a larger than life hero to me.

He came back out on the road and played bass with the Clinch Mountain Boys in late 1999 on up into early 2000 when Jack Cooke had his heart bypass surgery. During that time we always roomed together and I spent many hours listening to him tell stories of the old days. I would often sit at the breakfast table with him and Ralph and I could not believe that I was allowed to be part of that intimate circle. It was one of the biggest highlights of my life to stand on the stage of the Ryman Auditorium on September 29, 2011 and induct George into the IBMA Hall of Fame. My wife Greta and I have spent countless hours in his home surrounded by the warmth and love of all the Shufflers.



Because of what he did over 45 years ago, it created a job in the Stanley band and a chance for me to take my shot at carrying on the Shuffler crosspicking legacy. In the year 2000 George and I did an album together for Copper Creek Records called The Legacy Continues which was nominated for Recorded Event of the Year by the IBMA. I think he appreciated the fact that I was trying to carry on his work and he knew how much I respected him.

I feel blessed that I got to live in the time of George Shuffler. As so many of our musical heroes are leaving us at a rapid pace these days, it is important to pause and reflect on how much they enriched our lives. Rest in peace Georgie....I love you, Bud!

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### **Jerry Sullivan passes.** Richard Thompson | June 2, 2014 | No Comments



Jerry Sullivan of the famous traditional bluegrass Gospel group, the Sullivan Family, passed away at his home on Saturday May 31. He had been ill for some time.

A native of Wagarville, in rural southern Alabama, born on November 22, 1933, Gerald ‘Jerry’ Sullivan was attracted to Gospel music from childhood. He developed a liking for blues and rockabilly music also.

Another early influence was the old-time drop-thumb style banjo playing of his father J B Sullivan. Also Jerry’s older brother Arthur, when establishing a ministry based on Pentecostalism and encouraged his family to play music to accompany their worshipping.

He was an early recruit to the Sullivan Family, playing bass behind Margie, Enoch and Emmett. The family band launched its career at Radio WRJW Picayune, Mississippi.

From 1950 to 1956 the Sullivans were based in Jackson, Alabama, but they were soon touring, finding as much acceptance on the bluegrass and Gospel music circuits as they grew to favor a traditional sound.

Their first recordings were for the Revival label and the Loyal Records label, owned by fellow evangelist, revivalist and broadcast musician Walter Bailes. They stayed with Bailes between 1959 and the early 1970s. *Walking My Lord Up Calvary's Hill* and *Old Brush Arbor* were among their most popular songs.

During his years with the Sullivan Family band Jerry Sullivan grew into a talented and well-respected songwriter, counting among his credits such classic titles as *Sing Daddy a Song*, *The Last Mile* and *From the Manger to the Garden*.



In 1978 Jerry Sullivan teamed up with his then 14 year old daughter Tammy. Jerry, a natural baritone, sang and played guitar while Tammy, a mezzo-soprano, sang lead and played upright bass. That year they made their first recordings together, but the duo did not go into music full time until after Tammy graduated from high school.

About 1988 Marty Stuart, who had worked with the Sullivan Family prior to joining Lester Flatt's Nashville Grass, joined the duo, playing mandolin and he took on the role of producer of their next album, *A Joyful Noise*.

As for their two subsequent CDs, Jerry Sullivan, assisted by Stuart, wrote most of the songs on *A Joyful Noise*. Excellent as they were, none surpassed the quality of *Get up John*, the tune composed by Bill Monroe that now had words by Sullivan and Stuart. Their next album *At the Feet of God* was a 1996 Grammy nominee for best Southern Gospel, Country Gospel and bluegrass recording. Tomorrow, their final CD, also displayed considerable versatility and, like its predecessors, earned much critical appraisal.

The duo has made personal appearances at small rural churches in the deep South, at bluegrass festivals, in concert in theatres and larger coliseums. Their TV appearances have included ABC-TV's *In Concert* and *People's 20th Anniversary*, CBS-TV's *Roots of Country Music-The Ryman* and *Opryland Country Christmas* and TNN's *Music City Tonight*.

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Jamie Dailey on **Don Light** *Bluegrass Today* | June 23, 2014 |© Bluegrass Today 2014. All rights reserved.

Here's another bluegrass professional who's life and career were touched by the legendary Don Light, who passed away last week. Jaimie Daley recalls his former manager with great respect and affection.



Almost ten years ago this year, I was in Owensboro Kentucky working for Doyle Lawson. After our show a gentleman walked up to me and shook my hand and introduced himself as Doyle's soon to be new manager. His name was Don Light. I had heard Doyle mention his name before but I never thought much about it. As time went on I got to know Don and love and admire him. He told me stories about his days of managing some of the greats like, The Happy Goodman Family, Lester Flatt, Keith Whitley, The Oak Ridge Boys and Jimmy Buffet. His stories always captivated me.

In December of 2006 I walked in his office and told him that I was going to be leaving Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver and starting my own band with Darrin Vincent. Immediately he asked, "Do you have a manager?" I told him no. Long story short, he became our manager too.

Don Light managed us for the first five years of our career and he helped us make some history and do some things that had never been done in our genre. He helped guide us through some of our toughest and most challenging times, yet like a father, he loved us through it all.

On Monday mornings Darrin and I would walk in the office for a our weekly partners meeting with Don Light. Usually he would always start the meeting with some kind of joke but most always a story from the past. And normally he would have Darrin in the floor laughing at least twice before we left. Sometimes he would want us to ride with him to have lunch and this was always interesting as we felt he should have been a race car driver and we told him so. One of the funniest things he did that I recall off hand was us riding to lunch with him. When he pulled in the lot he parked in a handicapped spot, reached in his console and pulled out a handicap permit and looked at Darrin and I and said ever so sternly, "My cripple card!" At this point Darrin Vincent nearly broke the windows out of the car from laughing so hard. I'll have to say, I was pretty tickled myself.

Don Light fought hard for Dailey and Vincent's long term best interests but he did with class and integrity. One of the last pictures I was given of Don Light was from Nina Fortune. It's a picture of us performing our show at the Ryman auditorium in Nashville. Nina was standing off to the side of us back stage. She took a photo of Don Light standing there watching us. Mostly all you can see is his silhouette with our backs turned to him as we sang into the beautiful crowded filled room. It's a classic picture. When I look at the picture I wonder how many times he stood there watching his acts perform in years past. What a classic picture.

No more will we hear his stories, his one lined zingers. We won't get to sit on the other side of his desk listening to his years of experience and valuable advice. Never again will we laugh uncontrollably after watching him slam the telephone down after a phone call was finished, a Don Light trademark. But we've got the memories, memories that Darrin and I will hold dear to our hearts.

Without Don Light there very well could have never been the Dailey and Vincent brand as even we know it today. We will miss you greatly Don Light. Sing with the angels our dear friend and look for us soon. We love you!