

THE

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# WESTERN WAY

The Official Publication of the  
International Western Music Association

## IN THE CROSSHAIRS

**Patty Clayton**

SINGER - SONGWRITER

2024 IWMA FEMALE PERFORMER  
OF THE YEAR!

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Highlighting Members Around the Globe

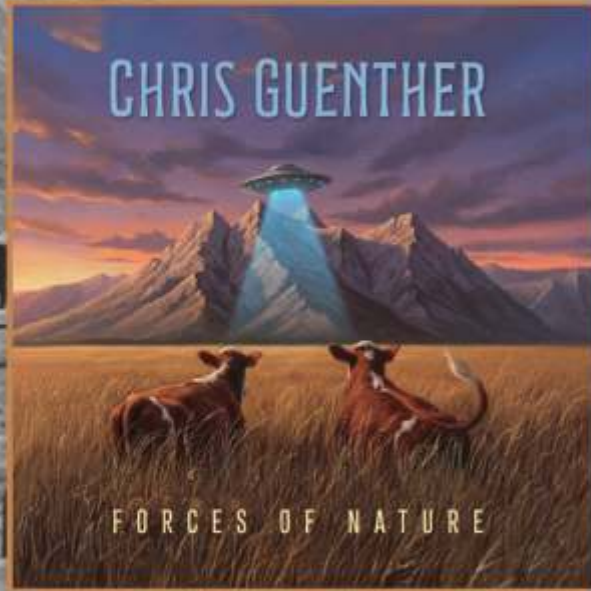
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**Marvin O'Dell**  
IWMA President

Celebrity is an interesting thing. Some believe it comes with a license to be rude, obnoxious, full of self-importance, and even freedom to break the law. Others believe that it requires humility, a sense of responsibility to charitably help

others, and a recognition that celebrity does not make one better than others simply because one has been endowed with a special talent.

I have, on occasion and due to happenstance, occasionally crossed paths with some who would be considered celebrities. In 1983, a friend of mine somehow managed to get a contract to produce a record album for Roy Rogers, Dale Evens, and their son, Dusty. After getting the deal, he realized that he was way over his head when it came to producing the project, so he called me up and asked if I would come down to Capitol Records studios in Hollywood to help him out. I readily agreed. This allowed me to spend 3 days in studio with Roy, Dale, and Dusty, plus a handful of highly-recognized musicians, including the great Billy Liebert and noted steel player Jay Dee Maness.

You would have thought that I was a family member the way Roy and Dale treated me. They made me feel like I was celebrity. I have never met more kind and humble people than those three. Whenever we took a break, either Roy or Dale almost always came over to ask questions about me or just small talk with me. Talk about making someone feel important!

On the other hand, I happened to be at an event where a country music performer, who happened to have had several hit songs rise high on the Billboard charts, was also present. When we both wound up standing together outside the event during a break, I introduced myself, complimented him on the success of his career, and received in return a stare that pretty much said, "Don't bother me; I'm important."

Playing in a celebrity golf tournament some years ago, the celeb in our grouping was an Olympic athlete who had won several gold medals. Any attempt to speak to him was futile as he would just turn and walk away.

One day I went out to play golf by myself and just happened to be teamed up with Jimmie Rodgers of "Honeycomb" and "Kisses Sweeter than Wine" fame. He was reluctant to tell me who he was, but after we talked a bit, I figured it out. We only played nine holes because he had to leave, but we spent those nine holes carrying on the most interesting talk about music and where he was in his career at the time. It was as if he and I were both just normal people, nothing special (true for me, not so much for him).

A gentleman of fame who became a good friend, and one whom I had the pleasure of more than one game of golf with, was former San Francisco Giants' shortstop and Oakland Athletics manager Alvin Dark. We were having lunch one day when the subject of Mickey Mantle's fame came up. I told Alvin, "I don't think I could handle not being able to go out and eat without being interrupted time and again by autograph hounds. Would you have wanted that kind of recognition during your career?". Alvin thought for a moment, then wistfully said, "Yeah, I would have liked that." Then he laughed that loud laugh of his.

Western music is a small niche when it comes to our following. Don Edwards once acknowledged to me that if you asked 100 people on the street if they had ever heard of him, probably 100 would answer "No." That doesn't leave much room for ego. But like Don said, "That's probably a good thing." (When I asked him once if he thought western music would ever become commercially viable, he answered, "I sure hope not.")

One thing that's special about the IWMA is that it's more like a family than a competition. It seems that everyone is willing to help everyone else. Except for a very few exceptions, there seems to be a happy shortage of ego. I remember hosting a house concert for a very prominent western performer once, and after the show, she got down on her hands and knees and helped clean up something that had been spilled on our kitchen floor. Sounds like something Roy or Dale might have done.

Benjamin Franklin said, "The man who loves himself will have few rivals." Celebrity can encourage an unhealthy love for one's self. Let's hope that the IWMA is never infected with such a disease.

MARVIN O'DELL  
President IWMA

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**THE INTERNATIONAL  
IN IWMA - Carol Markstrom**



**Patty Clayton** is a longtime member of the IWMA and a nationally recognized performer. She has been described as having a "voice as pure as the prairie wind" and is multi-awarded for her musical acumen as she delights audiences everywhere with her own brand of Western music.

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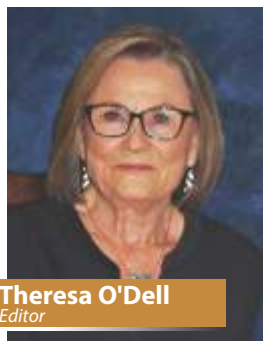


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**Theresa O'Dell**  
Editor

## A.I. EVERYWHERE

# AI!

What can I say that has not already

been said? Its influence has grown dramatically over the past year, and its reach now extends into nearly every part of daily life.

We see it in medicine, marketing, advertising, shopping, social media, writing, and publishing. Most concerning for our genre, it has also become increasingly present in music and even poetry. That raises an important question: what is real, and what is AI-generated? I encourage you to also read Rick Huff's collaborative article with David Nidel, Western World Tour, in this issue [page 45].

### A Warning Sign for Performers

I recently heard — though I have not independently verified it — that in Japan an AI persona was created that wrote a song which reached No. 1 on the charts. AI-generated songs have also charted in the United States. In this example, the concept reportedly went even further: the persona was given a name, its music was recorded, a concert tour was organized, and a virtual hologram performed before a sold-out stadium crowd complete with merchandise sales.

If that story is true, it should concern anyone who values the future of live performance. If it is not true, it is still worth considering — because a scenario like it may not be far off.

### What It Could Mean for Our Genre

We may be a small genre, and it is fair to wonder whether developments like this will ever fully reach us. Perhaps they will not affect many of us directly.

But they are likely to shape the careers of younger IWMA members who are just beginning in music. AI-assisted and AI-generated writing, recording, engineering, and production are already influencing the creative landscape. That influence will extend to the people in our genre who work in those areas, and even to the publication of this magazine and the content it carries.

### Questions We Need to Face

- *Do we embrace these tools thoughtfully?*
- *Do we ignore them and risk losing relevance?*
- *How do we protect the value of authentic human performance while adapting to change?*

I do not claim to have the answers—only the questions. But those questions matter. As professionals, we should begin looking for answers now, decide how we want to respond to the rise of AI, and share our strategies with one another as we move forward.

*Theresa*



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**Marsha Short**  
Executive Director

Things seem to be continually changing...some for the better, some not so much. I remember my grandmother saying that she was around for the first commercial airline flight in 1914 and the moon landing in 1969; everything in between she had a hard time keeping

up with. I know that feeling!

The first WMA "festival" I attended was in 2004 at the DoubleTree Hotel in downtown Albuquerque. There were scattered tables on the mezzanine for CD sales with one woman handling everything. WMA was just coming out of bankruptcy and there was concern that it couldn't sustain itself for another year. There was a taco bar lunch during the annual meeting. And there was an "opry," called a barn dance back then. There might have been 100 people there. Change needed to happen, and it did.

Today, the IWMA Convention attracts 450-500 people a day from around the country and around the world. There are Showcases, an Opry, Benefit Dinner, Educational Sessions, and a whole room dedicated to CD sales AND a consignment shop. And look at the number of young people who now attend. The future of IWMA has never looked brighter.

Things have changed and will continue to change over the years, hopefully always for the better. The thing that remains constant is that Western Music and Cowboy Poetry are now heard around the world. Is it like we heard in the 40s and 50s? Definitely not. New songwriters, poets, and performers all come together to keep the music and poetry alive and relevant.

We can't sit back and take all this for granted. A lot of people are working hard behind the scenes to make this work. You can help by letting people know how they can support this movement by supporting IWMA. Help us grow and change and become all that we know we can be!

*Marsha*



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- IWMA Chapters at Local Gatherings and Festivals
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# IN THE CROSSHAIRS

*by Tom Swearingen*

## PATTY CLAYTON





It might have been the accordion. Or it could have been the fiddle.

Born in Tacoma, Washington, while her father's Army service had him stationed in Fort Lewis, Patty Clayton's family moved to Portland, Oregon following her dad's retirement from the service when she was three years old. One of Patty's earliest childhood memories is being in first or second grade with identical twin girls who played identical accordions. "I remember being so mesmerized. I told dad, I wanted to learn how to play accordion." His response was an emphatic, "No." A year or two later, however, her father offered Patty the choice of piano or guitar lessons. "We didn't have a piano or guitar, but mom had an organ. I wasn't too fascinated by keyboard, so I told dad I'd like to take guitar lessons. Thankfully, he signed me up to start lessons when I was seven or eight years old and got me a little Stella guitar." The instructor was Barney Alexander, her father's barber. What she did not know until decades later was that Barney was not just a casual musician, but a champion old-time fiddle player and judge. "If I had known then I probably would have wanted to take fiddle lessons from him. Maybe my route in music would have been a little bit different, but I still would have wanted to have been involved in Western music. That's just in my blood. It's in my soul."

Patty's early lessons, centered around learning to read music, didn't quite click with her. "Those little black dots on lines weren't making sense to me. So, I started listening more to my records. I had Peter, Paul, and Mary. And dad had Son's of the Pioneers, Roy Rogers, and other western music. And we were always watching Bonanza and Gunsmoke and other westerns. I got more interested in learning a song by listening to it than trying to read any kind of music." Patty recalls that her dad was not happy with that. "There were times he would come by my bedroom and start pounding on the door saying, I'm not paying for lessons so you can play your records and sing along so turn that stuff off and read your music.' I understood where he came from, but I continued to learn by listening." She laughs and says, "By ear." Continuing, "When I entered middle school dad bought me an archtop Gibson. He really wanted me to learn jazzy Les Paul style which I did not." Playing a variety of styles of music in a high school band called Barbed Wire (a name cleverly inspired by the two Barbaras in the band) she gravitated to bluegrass. After high school Patty started going to bluegrass festivals because, "Everyone had acoustic guitars and it was so much fun to listen to that music. And I loved to sing harmony."



*First Guitar 1958 Struggling to learn those chords!*

*Continued on next page...*



*Back Porch String Band 1982*

Singing for Patty came naturally. "I was in school choir all thru elementary, middle, and high school. I mostly sang alto harmony parts but was also featured as a lead singer in school assemblies. My mom wrote in my baby book that I started singing 'How Much is That Doggy in the Window' when I was about three years old. And I sang 'I'm a Little Teapot' when I was taking tap dancing lessons at the age of five or six. The very first song I remember performing solo singing and playing guitar was Gene Autry's version of 'Buttons and Bows,' in the fourth grade talent show. I also used to barge in on any company we had visit with a little self-promotion, asking if they would like to hear me sing them a song...which they would indulge me only to be followed by my mom sending me back to my room."

Following high school graduation Patty went on to the University of Oregon Medical School and graduated with a degree in diagnostic imaging. After a year working at the medical school in research, she took a job on the central Oregon coast as radiographer at North Lincoln Hospital in Lincoln City. After doing X-rays for a few years there she applied to veterinary medical school in Colorado. "When I gave my radiologist boss that information he was like, 'Now, wait a minute. We have applied for a grant for an ultrasound machine, and we want you to learn how to do ultrasound.'" With that, Patty abolished her thoughts of going to veterinary school

and stayed in Lincoln City for another nine years as the sole sonographer for Lincoln County. "While living there I started playing bluegrass music with five guys in town. We called ourselves the Back Porch String Band. Also, while still in Oregon, I was in an all-women's bluegrass band based out of Seattle that we called Noteworthy."

Looking for a break from the wet skies of the Pacific Northwest, she took an ultrasound job in Colorado. With music a constant in her life, she ended up in a band called Ladies' Choice, another all-women's bluegrass band. "I found at that point that I was starting to incorporate more Western type songs, bluegrass style, with that band, which was a lot of fun. And then I started going more Western with a trio I was in called In Cahoots. We put out a CD produced and recorded by Charles Sawtelle from the band Hot Rize. And then I started playing bass with Liz Masterson and Sean Blackburn."

It was playing with Liz and Sean that introduced Patty to the Western Music Association, playing with them at the annual convention in 1997 and '98, held in Tucson at the time. In 2001 she began performing solo at the convention as she has for most years since. "I realized I had found my home where more people were singing the kind of music that I was genuinely interested in. And it inspired me to really buckle down and start writing more of my own music, Western style, and not just bluegrass. In the meantime, I was in a five piece Western swing band called Cowtown Boogie. And there have been other bands that I've been involved in playing either the bass or playing the guitar or playing both here in Colorado. So, my musical experience has grown over the years, between bluegrass and Western music, Western folk, Western swing, with the help of a lot of different people."





*Masterson & Blackburn WMA 1998*

With a burgeoning music career, Patty wished to have more flexibility in her professional schedule plus a desire to travel more. “So” she explains, “I started doing per diem sonographer work being sent to many different states for three-month contracts. In time I found an agent that was sending me exclusively to Alaska and to Hawaii all for ultrasound. And of course, every place I went, I had my guitar. And I was always finding open mics, coffeehouses, and other venues to find new audiences and share my music.”

“The last ten years of my career before I retired was exclusively in Hawaii, in Honolulu, with a large perinatology group at the Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children in the Fetal Diagnostic Center.” When she retired in May 2020, the timing coincidentally saw the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. “I had a full year to just be home, which was great. I loved it, using the time to write and record two albums.”

One of those albums, *The Real West* contained “Prairie Passages” a 2023 Best Western Song finalist for a Western Writers of America Spur Award. No stranger to awards, among those that she’s been recognized with include High Plains Old Time Country Music 1995 Female Vocalist of the Year, Academy of Western Artists 2007 Female Vocalist of the Year, as well as AWA 2002 Western Group of the Year when she was with Jill Jones and the Lone Star Chorale. The IWMA named her *Dancin’ in Denver* 2012 Western Swing Album of the Year, and she was 2004 and 2024 IWMA Female Performer of the Year.

*Continued on next page...*

Inspiration for Patty's songwriting comes from several sources, with a common thread her love of the West. "The very first song I wrote was about riding horseback on the beach and literally chasing a rainbow. I've always been a bit of a cowgirl at heart." That is not surprising given her family history in ranching. Patty's great-great maternal grandparents settled in Eastern Oregon with her great-grandfather as Oregon Trail immigrants in about 1864. As a

teenager he went to work riding for the government, rounding up wild horses. After he got married, he built two ranches in Idaho. Patty's visits to the Idaho ranch land inform her songs and even inspired her to create a documentary film titled "Ben and Ole's Land." A top finalist in the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering's 2008 Deep West Video Competition, it can still be viewed on the Western Folklife Center's YouTube channel and Patty's website [pattyclayton.com](http://pattyclayton.com).



As for other inspirations, Patty reflects, "I would have to say that one of my biggest influences for Western swing was the late, great Nancy Thorwardson. She was a dear friend who helped me learn some of my first swing chords. And I admire Kristyn Harris. And Devon Dawson. They have been so much fun watching and gleaning their energy off their music. And Juni Fisher is an inspiration as a performer and

*Cowtown Boogie with Maybelline*



songwriter. Her song 'The Same River' inspired me to write 'The Vaquero and Me.' And there are so many others that I have met and, in many cases, performed with through my involvement with the IWMA."

What is next for Patty? "I enjoy loading my Winnebago with CDs and instruments and heading out on new adventures. I still have a lot of energy to just get out there and share my music. My boyfriend Sean, who is a big fan of cowboy poetry and the Western genre, has been so supportive of my music. It is fun to have an extra special sidekick that likes to travel and appreciates what I do musically. So, more traveling is what I hope to see in my future as well as writing and working on future recordings."

Since that first gallop trying to catch the rainbow, Patty Clayton has enjoyed the ride and found some pots of gold along the way. As the ride continues, she is sure to find many more.



*Lone Star Choral 2002*

*Female Performer of the Year IWMA 2024*



**Tom Swearingen** is an Oregon cowboy poet often inspired by his own experiences and observations from the saddle. 2025, 2022, and 2019 IWMA Male Poet of the Year, Tom brings his stories to life with rhythm and rhyme and a style that makes him a popular performer. Tom's book *Reflection* was named 2020 IWMA Cowboy Poetry Book of the Year. For more on Tom visit [oregoncowboypoet.com](http://oregoncowboypoet.com).

# CHAPTER UPDATES

## **ARIZONA CHAPTER**

**President: Dan McCorison**  
[danmccorison@icloud.com](mailto:danmccorison@icloud.com)

The Arizona Chapter is proud to welcome our newest members, singer-songwriter Cam Pierce and poet Rik "Yonder" Goodell! Welcome aboard! Chapter members, Ashley Westcott and Dan McCorison will be performing at the Arts Alliance in Show Low, AZ on June 19.

## **BLACK HILLS & BEYOND CHAPTER**

**President: Brad Exton**  
[ramblinrangers@yahoo.com](mailto:ramblinrangers@yahoo.com)

Summer started early here in the northern tier, with dry, hot weather. Those conditions haven't stopped many of our members from scheduling a busy next few months. Paul Larson has started his very busy schedule of playing nightly at the Palmer Gulch KOA, where he performs for thousands of visitors every summer. When he has a break from there, you'll find him performing with his pard, poet Ken Cook. They make up the group, Cowboy Culture, South Dakota Style. John and Joanne Lowell have a new duo recording being released in June, titled "On My Way Home". It was co-produced by John, Joanne, and Merle Bregante and features many tunes that John penned. They also just returned from Ireland where they hosted a musical trip with many stops along the west coast of the island. Music galore for the 30 people that were part of the tour. Greg Hager recently returned from his 6th musical tour of Japan in time to headline the night show for the Dakota Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Medora, ND. He's looking forward to a busy summer of performing and the release of his 11th CD. IWMA's Female Poet of the Year, Sherl Cederburg has a very full schedule of performances throughout the Black Hills, Nebraska and Montana, before she heads down to the Convention in November. She'll be performing with the Ramblin' Rangers, Carol Markstrom, Pegie Douglas, and a few other folks from around the Hills. Harland Allen is one of our busiest performers, with shows in South Dakota and Wyoming. He is headlining several nights this year in Deadwood, SD at Lil's @ the Midnight Star and Smokin' J's Saloon. He has also been involved with some of our Chapter

Showcases. Harland is always looking for new venues where our chapter members can perform. We appreciate that greatly. Dean Bruce has been involved with our first showcase of the year at Pat's Place and recently performed at the Dakota Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Medora, ND. Our newest chapter member, Doug Figgs made the trip north to perform at the Sidney, Nebraska "Gold Rush Days" and then traveled on to the Black Hills to play a house concert in Custer, SD. Welcome to the chapter, Doug. The Ramblin' Rangers are booking up quickly with performances in South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Montana, but they will be taking a short time away from their music to visit with their brand-new grandson in Texas. Of course, they hope to get him started on a very small guitar soon. On a final note, our Vice President, Rik "Yonder" Goodell has decided to leave the green mountains and lakes of Montana for the high desert of Arizona. We appreciate what Rik has done for the Chapter and hope that he will continue to be a part of our group. Thank you, Rik. We wish all of you a very productive, safe, and blessed summer.

## **CALIFORNIA CHAPTER**

**President: Scott Tonelson**  
[Scott.tonelson@gmail.com](mailto:Scott.tonelson@gmail.com)

The California Chapter recently hosted a fantastic Western Music show in Laguna Woods (Orange County), arranged by Sharone Rosen and generously sponsored by the Village String Band of Laguna Woods. The event featured performances by our newest member, Peter Martin Homer, alongside Buddy Greenbloom, Ernie Neagle, ScottT, and Sharone Rosen with the Salt Creek Band on July 6. Up in Northern California, Cisco Jim Aceves has been keeping the tradition alive by hosting a monthly Western Music open mic night at "The Pizza Factory" restaurant in San Juan Bautista, CA

*Continued on page 17*



# RIDE EASY, PARD!

## *Spinning A Loose Haystack*

BY VIC ANDERSON

**M**y family, Uncle Leo and Uncle Wendall's families had a get together on the ranch where Leo worked, and where I worked some years later. My Dad and Wendall helped Leo feed the cattle. My cousin Jim and I got to go along. Jim was about 6 or 7; I was a year younger.

Leo drove a team of four horses with us on a stone boat alongside a 16' x 16' x 16' stack of loose hay, next to several other stacks.

A cable was thrown over top of the hay, between two stacks. One pair of horses pulled the cable as the other team backed, keeping the cable taut. The cable was pulled back by the other team, back and forth until it cut between stacks to the ground.

With the cable placed around the stack though a pulley to an eye bolt on the far front and rear corners of the stone boat, the four horses were hooked to it. As they pulled the cable, the stone boat was pulled under the stack of hay and as it slid, the cable around the stack caused the stack to spin onto the stone boat. With the stack loaded, a ladder was placed alongside and the men climbed on top. Jim and I got to go up with them. Uncle Leo spoke to the team, the stack was pulled out of the hay yard, and the men pitched the hay off to the cattle.

Feeding hay is a lot easier these days.

RIDE EASY PARD....Vic

**VIC ANDERSON** of Estes Park, CO, is a Singer/Songwriter, 3-time IWMA champion yodeler, virtuoso melodic whistler, poet, author, columnist and voice over narrator. As Vice-president of the Western Wordsmiths Chapter of the IWMA, Vic has long been an advocate for writing short stories as another way of presenting tales of the West.



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Floyd Beard  
George & Doris Bensmiller  
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Aurora, CO  
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Laporte, CO  
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Taos, NM  
Sierra Vista, AZ  
Sierra Vista, AZ  
Kirtland, OH  
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# CHAPTER UPDATES

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## COLORADO CHAPTER

**President: Geary Parsons**

**gearyparsons@outlook.com**



Lindy Simmons

By the time you read this, summer will be upon us. The Timberline Cowboys and Lindy Simmons have been on a roll. They've anchored Cowboy Tuesdays at the Diamond Belle in Durango, adding a new Liars' Contest and Irish Tuesday to the mix. June will be a tribute to Cowgirls in the Diamond Belle. They also played the April "Cowboy Concert in the Mountains" fundraiser for the Durango Cowboy Gathering and performed at the Simmons Ranch celebration to break in the new house and shop. Lindy has been teaching cowboy poetry writing in Durango schools for several months, traveled to perform at Wild West Days/Nebraska Cowboy Gathering in Valentine, and—while serving as camp cook for the Montoya Cattle Branding in La Plata, New Mexico—shared poetry over camp breakfast. She's also hard at work on a book. Catch Lindy and JJ Steele at the Green Box Arts Festival in Green Mountain Falls on July 8. The Colorado Chapter is gearing up for a Showcase on July 18 at the Mancos Brewery, featuring Steve

Jones, Susie Knight, the Timberline Cowboys, Lindy Simmons, Lynne Lewis, and more local talent. Jon Chandler is beginning a new anthology of stories and songs for the Historic Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs—a companion to his recording *The Grand Dame of the Rockies* from over a decade ago. He performed in the hotel's courtyard in late May, appeared at the Devereaux Polo Cup on June 14 in New Castle (performing at Stout Ranch during the match break), and recently joined Ernie Martinez at the iconic Cherokee Ranch and Castle in Sedalia to celebrate best-selling author Corinne Joy Brown's newest book. More shows are on the books across Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. Terry Nash (cowboy poet) and Peggy Malone were invited to entertain at GRAND VILLA HEALTH CENTER in Rifle on May 12 for their Western Day celebration, with a morning show at the Veterans' home the same day. As always, Peggy stays busy performing in Grand Junction senior and nursing homes. Steve Jones headed into the studio in June to cut a 4–6 song CD, aiming for a release by convention time in November. The Timberline Cowboys continue to host Cowboy Tuesdays at the Diamond Belle Saloon in the Strater Hotel in Durango through September 2026. Their fifth CD, *Spirits of the High Desert*, was released on May 1. Have a wonderful summer—I'll see you in the fall.

## COLUMBIA CHAPTER

**President: Tom Swearingen**

**tomswearingen@gmail.com**



Tom Swearingen

By the time this appears the 3rd annual "Around the Campfire" open mic that the Columbia



Kathy Moss

Chapter hosts at the Bowman Museum in Prineville, OR in conjunction with the Crooked River Roundup Rodeo will have taken place. We look forward to sharing photos and a report in the Fall issue. Our 6th annual youth cowboy poetry contest is taking entries via our website [iwmacolumbia.org](http://iwmacolumbia.org) through Sept. 1. Winners will be announced and grade level prizes awarded (\$250 cash and trophy buckles) at our annual concert to take place at the Bowman Sept. 26. We've been invited to team up with a Portland nonprofit that creates writing courses for prisons throughout Oregon and across the country. They're interested in our help with a cowboy poetry course. Duane Nelson is our point person on that. Those reporting news for this update are Kathy Moss who presented a series of workshops at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, Dan Canyon who's writing and recording the preliminary tracks for his next album, and Tom Swearingen who was the featured entertainer at Oregon's Black Butte Ranch in a Sisters Rodeo parter event and will be performing and hosting evening shows at the Arizona Cowboy Poets Gathering.



Duane Nelson

Dan Canyon

*Continued on page 20*

# In MEMORIAM

## WESLEY CECIL RUYBAL (1955 – 2026)



With heavy hearts, we announce the tragic and unexpected passing of Wesley Cecil Ruybal, 70, of Millsap, Texas, on April 30, 2026.

Born on May 29, 1955, Wesley was a man of deep faith, strong convictions, and a true cowboy spirit. He proudly served his country in the United States Army from 1974-1976, earning an honorable discharge and the Good Conduct Medal while serving as a Power Pack Specialist and Generator Equipment Operator with the 85th Combat Support Hospital at Fort Lee, Virginia.

Following his military service, Wesley dedicated nearly 40 years to the electrical power industry as a journeyman lineman. He began his career in 1981 with Texas Power & Light in Dallas, Texas, and retired in 2020 from Arizona Public Service. His work reflected his strong work ethic, mechanical skill, resilience, and dedication to serving others.

Wesley loved the simple and meaningful things in life — playing his mandolin, writing poetry, working leather in his saddle shop, riding his mules, and sharing stories with family and friends. Wesley found joy in the life God gave him. Above all else, he loved the Lord and never missed an opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with those around him. He will be remembered for his strength, humor, wisdom, resilience, and unwavering faith.

Wesley was preceded in death by his parents, Samuel and Velma Ruybal of Delta, Colorado; and his siblings Sam Ruybal, Elma Carrera, Robert Ruybal, Alexander Ruybal, and George Ruybal.

He is survived by his beloved wife and the love of his life, Kim Echols of Millsap, Texas; His daughters, Athea Ruybal of Gatesville, Texas, and Eryn Rapp (Jon) of Ogallala, Nebraska; and his son, Joshua Boyd Nichols-Ruybal of Fruita, Colorado.

He is also survived by his brother Roger Ruybal (Joyce) of Kansas City, Missouri; sister Ty Johnson (Kregg) of Orem, Utah; brother Larry Ruybal (Jeanie) of Lafayette, Colorado; sister Willie Sandoval (Moses) of Brighton, Colorado; and sister Valarie Whittaker (Earl) of Las Vegas, Nevada.

Wesley leaves behind cherished grandchildren: Koddee Landon of Montrose, Colorado; Hollianna Tassin of Gatesville, Texas; Robert McKinion III of Gisela, Arizona; Bryson Tassin of El Paso, Texas; Peyton Rapp and Haidyn Rapp of Ogallala, Nebraska; Riley Chesney (Christian) of San Mateo, Florida; Piper Nichols; Quinn Nichols; Hudson Westley Sawyer Nichols; and Westen Hunter Boyd Nichols of Bunnell, Florida. He was also blessed with great-grandsons Brody James Chesney and Cash Thomas Joshua Chesney of San Mateo, Florida, as well as many beloved nieces, nephews, extended family members, and dear friends whose lives were touched by his kindness, faith, humor, and friendship.

## JUDITH C. WELCH (1943 - 2026)



Judith C. Welch, 83, of Chaparral, New Mexico, passed away peacefully on March 21, 2026, in El Paso, Texas.

Born in 1943 in Wheeling, West Virginia, Judith was a beloved daughter and sister. After leaving Wheeling, she eventually made her home in New Mexico, where she devoted her life to her work as a professional and celebrated artist.

Judy was a well-known western artist who loved setting up her booth at various cowboy symposiums, especially at the Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium and at the IWMA conference in Albuquerque. She participated in many other shows and exhibits but these were her favorites. She was a member of

IWMA for many years and tried to make every show she could. These were her people, and she loved them very much.

Many musicians and chuck wagon cooks were lucky enough to own and wear her custom neckties and showed them off proudly. When we pulled up to the various shows, there was never a problem getting help hauling in all her booth pieces and artwork. For some reason, everyone wanted to help carry in the boxes! She painted custom wild rags for so many artists; she loved sitting and developing the patterns they had in their minds and putting them on silk.

Many of Judy's art pieces became extremely popular but none so much as the little burro who said "Howdy" to everyone. If you know, you know. She used pictures of livestock from various friends' ranches and corrals as subjects for her artwork. At times she used her friends and their families, too. One of her favorite pieces was "Ready to Ride" with Gary Prescott as her subject.

Thank you for so many shows and so many years of friendship, shared stories, and the true cowboy camaraderie. Judy loved you all, and she will be missed. - Kat Livingston

## PHIL WILLIG



We were saddened to learn of the passing of Phil Willig, the 2024 Bill Wiley Award recipient and avid supporter of the IWMA. Willig passed on May 31 after a long illness. Details were not available by press time. Our condolences to his family and friends.

# CHAPTER UPDATES

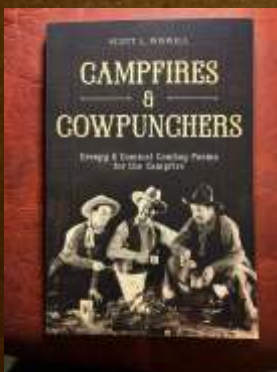
...Continued from page 17

**KANSAS CHAPTER**  
**President: Martha Farrell**  
[marthafarrell@gmail.com](mailto:marthafarrell@gmail.com)



*New member: Lora McDonald.*

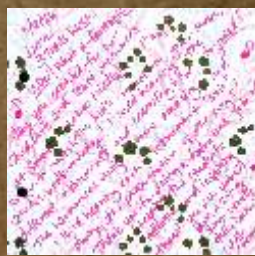
Hi friends! The Kansas Chapter is planning our first group concert in several years for August. The "Summer Roundup" will feature a number of our members, with special spotlight on the visiting Patty Clayton and our own 3 Trails West. May and June featured two regional qualifying events for the Kansas Cowboy Poetry Contest. Headed up by Ron Wilson, they were held in Hays in the west and Cottonwood Falls in the east. Winners compete at the championship in late July in Manhattan. Some individual accomplishments this spring: Betty Burlingham was named Champion Cowgirl Poet at the Crossroads Poetry Gathering in Depew OK. Our newest member Lora McDonald has released a single called "A Horse Like Mine." She recorded it at Geneva Sky Studios with Jesse



*Scott Wiswell's book 2026*

Friesen. Lora lives on the family cow-calf ranch in the Flint Hills, and it's a very personal story. Poet S c o t t

Wiswell's latest book is called "Campfires & Cowpunchers." Scott says it is "a collection of both scary and comical



*Thank you note to 3 Trails West.*

cowboy/western poems that will be sure to send a chill down your spine or a rolling of your eyes." 3 Trails West changed some lives this spring when they performed seven sets of music and instruction for Summit Lakes Middle School in Lee's Summit, MO. They took their whole six-piece band and performed for over 700 students during a 5-hour period.



*Betty Burlingham*

**OKLAHOMA CHAPTER**  
**President: Leigh Ann Matthews**  
[info@matthews-music.com](mailto:info@matthews-music.com)

Robert Beene accompanied several other musicians for a men's conference at Kiamichi Country Cowboy Church held in McAlester on March 27-28, and longtime

Oklahoma Chapter member Francine Roark Robison performed during an Open Mic session at the Clem McSpadden Ranch Horse Show in Claremore in May. Robert Case Maxwell and wife/music partner Susie, aka A Little Farther West, wrapped up their latest recording project in early June and continue to gain listeners and fans on TikTok. Scott and Leigh Ann Matthews performed at Reba's Place (Reba McIntire's Restaurant/Venue) in Atoka, OK at the end of May with plans to return for another booking in the fall. They also returned to the annual Bass Reeves Western History Celebration held in June at Three Rivers Museum in Muskogee.

**TENNESSEE CHAPTER**  
**President: Aspen Black**  
[aspen@aspenblackcowgirl.com](mailto:aspen@aspenblackcowgirl.com)

The Tennessee Chapter is planning a Day of the Cowboy event at Nashville Coffees on the afternoon of Saturday, July 25. Among the performers will be Mark Lynn Young, Gone with the West, and The Western Troubadours. Chapter President Aspen Black has begun hosting a once-a-month "western music preferred, but open to all styles" open mic at Lakehill Vineyard in Calloway, VA, under the aegis of the IWMA-TN Chapter. She's also looking for a venue in the Nashville area where she can host an Open Mic, in contrast with the more common writers' nights at area venues. The chapter continues to host quarterly "pickin' & potluck" get-togethers, and the chapter board meets via Zoom every month.

## **TEXAS CHAPTER**

**President: Cary Wiseman**

**Wisemanranch71@gmail.com**

So far, this year has been going well and full of events with wonderful music. Summer has come and that means National Day of the Cowboy and music camps. Both are big events for many members of the Texas Chapter so be on the lookout for information about different events that you can attend and hear great cowboy music and poetry!! God Bless and Happy Trails!

## **UTAH CHAPTER**

**President: Dale Major**

**cvcowboyrendezvous@gmail.com**

Greetings from the Beehive state, sometimes called the 'crossroads of the West'. Wintertime brings out the best when it comes to Western entertainment. Our chapter joined with the Cowboy Poets of Utah for a winter symposium in January at a Veterans Home in Payson. Rod Miller and Darrell Holden gave a great presentation about cowboy poetry's popularity beginning with the Elko Gathering. A great meal was shared by all and then the veterans in the home were treated to a western show featuring members of both groups. Kudo's to Bill Wright for putting this program together. This event was followed by the Western Songwriters Series hosted by Tyler Guy. Ned LeDoux, Trinity Seely and Kevin Davis played to a capacity crowd. Tyler is taking his event south this summer with a concert at the Butch Cassidy Hideout Resort in Circleville that will feature the music of Dave Stamey. Something to look forward to. Utah was well represented at the Elko gathering as well with Dakota Holdaway, Darrell Holden, Jeff Carson and Clancy Ballard. Kathy Smith and Dale Major were featured at the 'best of open mic' show held at the end of the event.

Next up was the Mesquite Western Roundup. This event has grown over the years with Russ Westward at the helm and now boasts two performances featuring outstanding southern Utah poets and musicians. The Cowboy Rendezvous came next March 12-15 and featured the music of Brenn Hill, Skip Ewing, and Jim Curry, along with many other musicians and poets. For those unable to attend, live streaming was offered at [cvcowboy.org](http://cvcowboy.org). The Iron Door Theatre in Malad, Idaho hosted the next opportunity for western entertainment with two days of cowboy poetry and music. Thanks to Ken Wellard and Brian Arnold for putting this program together last March. In April we moved south to the Juab Cowboy Poetry and Western Music Gathering. Dakota Holdaway put this April 24-25 weekend event together and it featured seven outstanding performers over two days that served the western entertainment needs of central Utah very well. All in all, things are busy here with lots of western entertainment. We're looking forward to a busy summer as well with a showcase in June for the summer citizens that come to Cache Valley's various farmer's markets and county fairs. For more information about upcoming events and chapter members, you can go to our website shared with the Cowboy Poets of Utah, [cowboypoetsofutah.org](http://cowboypoetsofutah.org). Happy Trails.

## **WESTERN WORDSMITHS CHAPTER**

**President: Ron Wilson**

**[ron@ronscowboypoetry.com](mailto:ron@ronscowboypoetry.com)**

The new Western Wordsmiths website is up and running! Thanks to webmaster Martha Farrell, the website [www.westernwordsmiths.org](http://www.westernwordsmiths.org) includes background about our chapter, a calendar of coming poetry events, info about Penned by Lantern Light and the IWMA poetry contest, and information about performing members plus their video clips. Members can still have their content included on the website by emailing: [westernwordsmithsiwma@gmail.com](mailto:westernwordsmithsiwma@gmail.com). Big tip o' the hat to Micki Fuhrman who was recently elected vice president of Western Writers of America. After serving for two years as VP, she will assume the office of president in 2028.

Congratulations, Micki! Aspen Black is working on compiling the IWMA charts and advises us that there are not cowboy poetry albums charting on DJ playlists so now is a great opportunity to record cowboy poetry. Last fall, Devon Dawson and Geoff "Poppa Mac" McKay collaborated in the IWMA "team penning" songwriting contest and came up with a well-received song called "The Legend of Wildcat Morrell" which tells the tale of one of the first circuit ridin' preachers in Texas. ...



*Western Wordsmiths president Ron Wilson presenting a plaque of appreciation to Congressman Ron Estes.*

*Continued on page 22*

# CHAPTER UPDATES

...Continued from page 21

Betty Burlingham was named champion cowgirl poet at the Crossroads Poetry Gathering in Depew OK in April. Jeff Davidson is serving as Board Chair for the Pioneer Bluffs Flint Hills Ranching Heritage Center in Kansas. In May Western Wordsmiths were among those who presented a plaque to Congressman Ron Estes in appreciation for his introduction of a bipartisan Congressional resolution honoring the American cowboy and historic cattle trails as part of the America 250 celebration. We continue to follow our theme "The Power of Words: Heritage, Creativity, Service."

## YOUTH CHAPTER

**Committee:** Belinda Gail [belindagail@protonmail.com](mailto:belindagail@protonmail.com); LeeLee Robert [lee@leeleemusic.com](mailto:lee@leeleemusic.com)  
Marsha Short [marsha@westernmusic.org](mailto:marsha@westernmusic.org)

It's been a great year for many of our Youth Chapter Members. Congratulations to Bodhi Linde on his high school graduation. We all wish him well as he pursues his musical career full time. Sisters Ranelle, Brie, Aspen and Isley of The Arizona Wildflowers, have qualified for the 2026 Junior NFR and Junior World Rodeo Championships in Las Vegas, Nevada. The event is set to take place in December in conjunction with the National Finals Rodeo. Ranelle started her own apparel company earlier this year, appropriately named Horse Cult. Youth Chapter Member Mackynsie McKedy was nominated for Vocalist of the Year-Traditional/Classic Country at the Josie Music Awards. Birdie Nichols is in Australia getting ready for her world tour with The Butler Band. Be sure to catch up with them in Albuquerque during the Convention! Eighteen Youth Chapter Members were awarded IWMA Scholarships this year to attend YBarJ Camp (Lily Anderson, Kaylea Stafford, and Kail Wilson), BAM Music Camp (Ben Bussard, Otis Isenhardt, Ellis Isenhardt, Bridger Burrus, Parker Burrus, Devon Smith, Austin McKedy, Kyle Koenig, Farrah Lynn Shields, Conley Marshall, Cash Dodd, Sienna Yetter and Jaxson Yetter), and the Texas Fiddle Camp (Ella Broussard and Jolie Marshall). Congratulations to all of them for working to hone their skills. Watch for them to go places! 🐾

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We're off to one grand roundup,

there's plenty of work to do.

We've lost ground we can make up

but it'll take more than a few.

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# Penned by Lantern Light

Beauty in  
BLACK AND WHITE

by Sheri Cederburg

When  
the stars... shine like silver  
In that onyx Western Sky  
And the moon is just a sliver  
I can't help but wonder why  
I am here to see such beauty  
For I've done nothin' right  
Yet this cowgirl gets to gander  
At this beauty in black and white.  
For I'd been ridin' hard for hours  
Since the dawnin' of the day.  
The sky still had a touch of pink  
When I set out on my way.  
But now my horse is tuckered  
And that pony's done me right  
So he and I both long to see  
That beauty in black and white.  
So we camped beside still water  
Right near that quiet brook.  
I lay down on my bedroll  
Raised my eyes, gave a look.  
The nighthawks start their dancing  
As they dip and dive in flight

And call out with expectation  
Of the beauty of the night.  
Then the world fades from gray to black  
When all the light is gone.  
I gaze in awestruck wonder  
As God's handiwork is shown.  
The Milky Way is thick as cream  
And that name sure suits it right  
It's here that I have come to love  
This beauty in black and white.  
See that North Star in the sky  
It's led many a cowboy home  
And I recall how God sent a Light  
Lest His children choose to roam.  
As the Big Dipper pours down on me  
I will settle down for the night.  
Here I lay in peace and ponder  
The beauty of black and white  
Where the stars shine like silver  
In that onyx Western Sky  
And the moon is just a sliver.  
Perhaps now I know why.



Sheri is an accomplished author, storyteller, award winning poet, and humorist. She is from the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota. Sheri writes her own material, which includes old west, new west, and gospel based poetry. She speaks from the heart, and her stories will make you laugh, cry, (or at least think a little). She is the 2025 Female Poet of the Year with the International Western Music Association (IWMA) and is a Will Rogers Medallion Award winner.

**IWMA  
CONVENTION  
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## Who was... **JOHN M. "JACK" ELLIOTT?**

**Jack Elliott** was born on May 7, 1914, in Gowanda, NY. He married **Judy Rotman** in 1940 in Chicago, and they had one child, **John Michael Elliott, Jr.** While in Chicago, Jack composed songs for **Dale Evans**, who was working at the Chicago Theatre, and he came to Los Angeles with her in 1942 for a radio audition. Both of them got the job!

In Hollywood, Jack composed songs for over 40 Western movies at Republic Studios alone, most notably for **Roy Rogers** & Dale Evans films. His compositions included the title songs for the following films in the 1940s and 50s: *Lights of Old Santa Fe*, *Rainbow Over Texas*, *Bells of Rosarita*, *Bells of San Angelo*, *Song of Arizona*, *Heldorado*, *Under Nevada Skies*, *Roll on Texas Moon*, *Home in Oklahoma*, *Apache Rose*, *North of the Great Divide*, *Susanna Pass*, *Under Colorado Stars*, *Pals of the Golden West*, *Grand Canyon Trail* and the title song from the **Rex Allen** film, *Under Colorado Skies*.

Not only were Elliott's songs used on screen; Roy Rogers had successful commercial recordings of "Roll on Texas Moon" and "Home in Oklahoma" for RCA Victor, and these recordings are still available today. **Gene Autry's** soundtrack recording of Elliott's

beautiful "Twilight on the Rio Grande" has also been issued on CD.

Some of Elliott's title songs are more memorable than the films they came from, but in addition to title songs, Elliott wrote many other songs for those and other films. For example, film collectors may remember "Slumber Trail" from *Under Nevada*



*Skies*, "Cowboy's Dream of Heaven" from *Under Colorado Stars*, "By a Laughing Spring" from *North of the Great Divide*, "Belle of the El Dorado" from *Sunset in El Dorado*, and a personal favorite of mine (which I play each year on my Christmas show), "Every Day is Christmas in the West," from *Trail of Robin Hood*, a beautiful song composed by Elliott with Foy Willing, that **Don Edwards** found on

the film soundtrack and recorded, for the first time, in 1996.

"Lights of Old Santa Fe" was sung in two Roy Rogers films and, while not recorded commercially, it was a staple on radio broadcasts. In recent years, it has also been released on CDs of radio and/or soundtrack performances. There were many more songs, not all of which were Western, but fans of B-Western movies count many of them among their favorites, e.g. "Saskatoon," "What's Doin' Tonight in Dreamland" and "Saving for a Rainy Day."

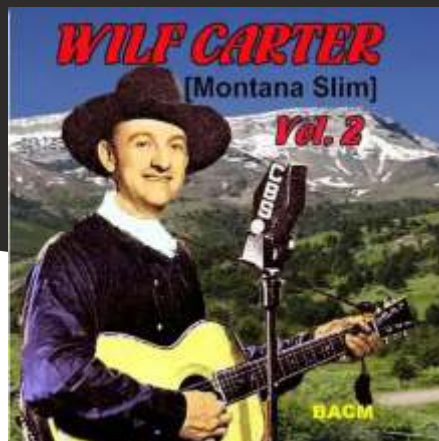
Jack Elliott died on January 3, 1971, but by that time he had made a major contribution to the Western music genre, primarily through his film music. Today, an internet search will turn up a number of other Jack Elliots, who should not be confused with this member of the Western Music Hall of Fame (inducted in 2005). Part of the confusion may be due to the fact that John M. "Jack" Elliott's name appears on sheet music and in film credits as simply Jack Elliott.

One of those whose name appears frequently today is "**Ramblin' Jack**" **Elliott** ("Ramblin' Jack" is still very much alive and entertaining audiences as of this writing).

# WILF CARTER

## VOL. 2

BACM CD 756



This new release from the British Archive of Country Music contains 20 tracks featuring the legendary Canadian yodeler, Wilf Carter, also known as Montana Slim, the Yodeling Cowboy. Slim yodels on this release, but not enough to label it as a strictly yodel album. Still, with songs like "The Yodeling Trail Rider," fans of his yodeling will be pleased.

The arrangements are sparse, made for Wilf and his guitar, and the recordings date from the mid-1930s, but they're nicely cleaned up. The audio quality can be appreciated on the BACM website, which is set-up to allow prospective customers to hear a few introductory notes from each song on the album, before making the purchase.

It's vintage Wilf, and you can learn more (as well as purchase the music online), at <https://country-music-archive.com/country-cds/>.

# ROY ROGERS RADIO SHOW

BACM CD D 755



In the mid-1940s, Roy Rogers starred in a radio show, recorded in Hollywood before a "live" audience (you can hear him flub a line now and then - but no one cared. He was, after all, the "King of the Cowboys"). Three of these shows are on this new CD from the BACM label. One has been edited a bit so that all three could fit on one disc.

The first 2 shows include music by the Sons of the Pioneers ("Payday," "Ride, Ranger, Ride" and the Farr Bros. play "Honeysuckle Rose"). Roy sings the opener and one more, accompanied by the Pioneers. The first show (from the 1944-45 season) includes music and dialogue by Pat Friday, a singer with a beautiful voice who also

appeared in movies, but not Westerns. Actually, she preferred pop music, having co-starred in at least one film, singing with Glenn Miller's orchestra a few years earlier. On this show, she sings a then-new Cole Porter composition, "Every Time We Say Goodbye," apparently chosen because Porter had recently composed the hugely successful "Don't Fence Me In," and orchestra leader Perry Botkin talks about him briefly with Roy and Pat.

By the time the other shows were recorded, Dale Evans had joined Roy on-screen, and the two were becoming popular as a pair. So, Dale became part of the radio show and Pat Friday

left. The shows include brief Western-themed stories (one about Californian Joaquin Murietta, and the other about a Texas Ranger). The first two shows feature "Bob Nolan & the Sons of the Pioneers" while the band on the last show is "The Whippoorwills" (Roy Lanham's distinctive, legendary guitar work is very audible during the latter's appearances).

On the record company's website, you can listen to brief excerpts from each track on the CD to help you make your decision. And you can order directly from the BACM website: <https://country-music-archive.com/country-cds/sis:country-music-archive.com>.

*Continued on page 29...*



Submit CDs (preferred) to Rick Huff, PO Box 8442, Albuquerque, NM, 87198-8442 or DOWNLOADS to bestofthewest@swcp.com. Submitting a CD for review does not guarantee that it will be reviewed or that a review will be published. Finalized CD cover art must accompany the work and be unsigned.

## THE CURIO COWBOYS

### "Oklahoma Waltz"



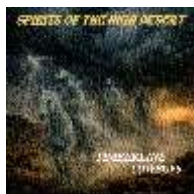
Deservedly The Curio Cowboys were recently honored with the Eric Larsen Award for Lifetime Achievement from the New Mexico

Music Awards. Beyond recapturing in full fidelity the vintage sound of early Western Swing bands, leader John Feldman's grand goal is to explore the music catalogs of such artists. Often he turns up deeply buried treasure.

The subject here is IWMA Hall of Famer Johnny Bond, known to mid-century audiences for his "Hot Rod Lincoln" and others' takes of "Have I Told You Lately" and "Tomorrow Never Comes." Bond's "Cimarron" (written in

## TIMBERLINE COWBOYS

### "Spirits Of The High Desert"



Colorado's prolific Timberline Cowboys again bring their folks what they hunger for in their newest release. Songwriter J.

Michael Mullins (vocals, rhythm guitar) and partner Geary Parsons (lead, rhythm and bass guitars) ply their a rustic and homespun effect onto outlaw ballads "Ghosts Of The Gallows" and "Sacrifice," a gunfighter's reflection "As I Lay Dying," a herding song "Out Here In The Rain," a portrait of ranch land heritage "Hallowed Ground," a gentle courtin' piece "The Cornflower Waltz," a lost chance at love "Whispers On The Wind" and one that decries the pains of panning "The Gold Miner's Lament."

The Timberline Cowboys' style is intimate and unfettered. It's essentially a house concert on your player. For their subject matter they tend to prefer engaging in observations from the sideline. The songs mostly relate stories using classic Western imagery rather than getting into personal experience 'nuts & bolts' of the cowboying trade as some others do. And, of course, that's a valid creative choice.

Ten tracks total, recommended for their fans.



## STACEY BREEN

### "Back To Me"



Western Swing and Country Swing gained popularity in Ireland at roughly the same time as they were first heard in America.

Exports of Bob Wills' Texas Playboys' and others' records along with touring Swing bands were a perfect match for the dance-happy nation. With smooth, bright vocals Stacey Breen continues the tradition with this collection of Swing and Country ballads. There is some synthesized support, but the necessary fiddle & steel sound is present often enough.

The Western Swing tracks (and picks) include "San Antonio Rose," "Close Up The Honky Tonks" and "Everybody Loves A Winner." Country Swingers are "Foolin' Round," "Queen Of Country Music" (the Irish one...Philomena Begley) and "I Think I Heard It From My Heart." That song's modulations in the chord progression are particularly catchy. Interestingly the

Sam Cooke hit "Another Saturday Night" is given a Country treatment. The remainder of the songs are slow Country ballads.

The dancers should find this one to their liking. Twelve tracks total, recommended.



## MEGHAN CLARISSE

### "Shadows Of A Ghost Town"



Seeing a release come in from Colorado producer Don Richmond immediately signals that it will be worthwhile.

This one from

Meghan Clarisse has a specific mission. To quote from its notes, it's "a deeply personal and poetic exploration of place, memory and mortality told through the lens of the American West." In so doing the lyrics depart from the expected trail of Western fare.

With tight Country/Folk style support from Richmond's players, Clarisse delivers tough minded words with a certain tone of plaintive innocence. Those words are printed in the booklet allowing further study, but be advised Spell Check was apparently overthinking things or

frustration after hearing the bland theme for the 1931 Oscar-winning movie) remains a standard of the Western repertoire. The Curios ply the rambunctious, freewheeling style of early Swingers onto Bond creations (and collection picks) like "The Road Is Way Too Long," "How Low Do The Blues Want To Go," "Might As Well Forget It," title track "Oklahoma Waltz," "I Wonder Where You Are Tonight" and "Stars Of The Midnight Range (w/former Tumbleweeds Byron & Jordan Ripley).

News flash! The Curio Cowboys' next venture has them reaching deep into the songbags of Louise & Curt Massey! Fourteen tracks, recommended.



## TOMPKINS SQUARE ARTISTS

### *"Imaginational Anthem Vol. XIV: Ireland"*

Here's one of those releases offered on both CD and vinyl formats. Expect more of them. We're covering this one on behalf of our pickers as well as our listeners. These solo tracks focus on technique and interpretive skills. The result is misty and deep as the Cliffs of Moher. Historically Irish ballads, broadsides and herding techniques helped shape the West and its music. Maybe this album illustrates another influence.

How often do you get a chance to appreciate a solo steel guitar? David Murphey grants that here, with "The March Of The King Of Laos." Spoiler: it's not a march! The players on these tracks use mostly acoustic, electric and 12-string guitars. It's a grand study in style as these artists draw emotion from box and string. Other Irish guitar meisters here are Brendan Jenkinson, Caoimbe Hopkinson, Damian O'Neill, collection coordinator Cian Nugent, Mark McKowski, N.C. Lawlor, Aonghus McEvoy, Sean Carpio and Junior Brother.

Interestingly earlier volumes in the series have included titles like "Coyotes," "Ghost Towns," "Texarkana" and "Cowpasture River Highway Blues." Ten tracks, highly recommended on several levels.

dozing resulting in some contextual (and other) typos.

Among the eleven tracks 'stand alone' Western works include "The Ghost Of California" (letting go of place), "Desert Run" (killer on the lam), "Copper and Quartz" (mining a relationship), "Here I Am Again" (another that isn't working) and "Never Going Home" (fugitives). Give it a try.

Sidebar: It's a sorry state when a promotional sheet has to bear the broadcast advisory "all tracks FCC clean." Even 'Ghost Riders' is now being flagged for its "soul from Hell" line.

## JOHN & JOANNE LOWELL

### *"On My Way Home"*



First you have John Lowell, so you're most of the way to superior from the start. Add performance and life partner

Joanne, then stir in co-producer Merel Brigante with an orchestra-load of top session players across various tracks and the heart nearly stops!!

In this all-acoustic follow-up to the lauded album "Snow On The Wineglass" we have a mellow mix of

Western and Americana ballads. A nice Cowboy Swinger starts things off ("Jubilee Café," co-written with Rick Lang). Other collection picks include "The Print Behind The Bar" (a backstory on a famous Charlie Russell painting), the Lowells' saga song "Ghosts Upon My Back" and John's "Raven Black Hair," where a young roper is thrown for a loop. Joanne takes the lead vocals on more picks (Dean Johnson's easy waltz "Faraway Skies," John's co-write with Sarah Pierce "Stagecoach Mary" and Ben Bullington's "Maybe There's A Future For A Cowboy." Joanne specifically writes in the liner notes that artists should look further into the Bullington catalog.

Twelve tracks, highly recommended on a number of levels.

## JJ STEELE

### *"Just Passin' Thru"*



When spoken, Cowboy Poetry becomes a performance art form. In JJ Steele you have a true master of that art. Obviously

his primary interest is in storytelling as he adroitly rhymes lines. His poetry is perfectly in meter, but he's not a slave to the construction of the lines as some seem to be. He just 'talks' with you. And he is wonderfully effective at telling his rhyming tales (tall or otherwise).

All of the works are worth your time, but particular picks include "A Cowboy Poem" (here's what the cowboying thing is, for sure), "Buddies" (time spent hellin' around with Gary McMahan), "The Yard" (a tip of the Stetson to those who get the steak to the table), "Spurs" (why there's two hangin' there now), "Old School" (an overheard overture), "Hunter's Rodeo" (a private ride that was none too pretty) and "The Cedar Post" (y'ever had the remains of an old fence talk to ya?).

JJ Steele is the real deal. Deal yourself in on this one. Fifteen tracks, very highly recommended.

*Continued on page 46...*



## SAMPLING THE SINGLES

Honoring 100 years by saluting DJs, hosts and players who brought Western Swing to Tulsa's airwaves, **Al Ingram** offers the vintage-style tribute **Big 1170 KVOO**. The song swings through many of the major players who spun records that also helped make Cain's Ballroom a renowned venue. If KVOO is a 'century plant,' here is its bloom.

Here's one of a number of singles to come from the new album by IWMA Hall Of Famer **RW Hampton**. The mantle of honest-ta-gawd Western Swing is guaranteed for **West Texas Town** through its pedigree of being performed with Jake Hooker & The Outsiders' solid Swing support. As if it matters, the 'town' of the title is Amarillo.

The prolific **Jon Chandler** is our driver in a rolling acoustic single. We head down **The Western Road** on a grand tour visiting folks we know by first name (Johnny Boggs by full name!). It's also an effective metaphor for what we find as we travel through the Western genre's offerings, and here we get more scenic specifics than Willie gave us.

With co-writer Tom Swearingen, gritty-voiced singer **Randy Palmer** rides in with **Cowboy**, a look the shining figure of hero worship. "He might be an outlaw or he might be a saint," the lyrics say. "He's the building block of heroes and Cowboy is his name." Seldom since "Great American Cowboy" has a song so glowingly championed the guy.

Balladeer/songwriter **Carol Markstrom** returns with a gentle song about longing for elements of desert life. While she misses the scenery, **Juniper and Sage** are scents used ceremonially around Indian country. Sweet native flute from David Rose over mellow musical mounting from Merel Brigante can help offset any pollen count concerns.

Former steer wrestler-turned-singer **Wynn Williams** tells a story through the eyes of the horse in **Tornado [Re-Ride]**. Formerly the bane of every hopeful cowboy's existence, now the storied bronco has aged out. 'Horses' have sung their story before, but this co-write is nicely dynamic. "Tornado" is not to be confused with "Whirlaway," of course!

Singer/songwriter **Bobby Marquez** has 'Arbuckled down' and issued a frisky new song about the miraculous restorative properties of **Cowboy Coffee**. Here you have a basic recipe on how to do it right. Hint: Nowhere in it is the old "throw in a horseshoe and if it sinks add more coffee" line heard. The elixir should have legs, though, bowed or not.

If ever there were an example of reciprocal influence in the Western sound, this could be it. It may be Irish locales **Peter Costello** salutes in **The Road Keeps Calling**, but the fiddle "drone" used here was first created in America to capture the sound of bagpipes. It could have come straight from one of our classic Country or Western arrangements.

*Continued on page 41*



... continued from page 25

# DUDE MARTIN AND HIS ROUNDUP GANG, VOL. 2

BACM CD D 753



Dude Martin was born in the San Joaquin Valley in the early part of the 20th Century, and he was an important force in Western Swing music for over 20 years, beginning in the mid-1930s. While his base was in Northern California, radio transcriptions (MacGregor, in particular) and later, recording contracts with RCA Victor and Mercury, led to widespread name recognition.

This new BACM release contains 29 of his commercial recordings from 1947-52. They include the popular novelty tune, "Murder on the Radio," and my favorite, a Western Swing tune titled "Don't Come Cryin' to Me," a song Martin co-wrote (with T. Johnson) in 1948. But there is a wide-ranging collection on this disc, from "Nevada Waltz," Martin's own "On a Hill Faraway in East Texas" and "Old Doc

Brown," to "Pistol Boogie" and the Gene Autry-Smiley Burnette composition, "I'd Love a Home in the Mountains."

The full contents list and audio samples can be found on the BACM website: <https://country-music-archive.com/>.



## TOMPKINS SQUARE

Recently, Rick Huff put me in touch with a new (to me) company called Tompkins Square Records. They specialize in "old" recordings, making them available as downloads, and we thought you may be interested in some of their offerings. For instance, they have Bascom Lunsford's "Sherman's Valley" (a "Red River Valley" sound-alike). Titles range from 20s jazz to folk music, restored (to the extent possible – some, remarkably well), and you can get an idea of what's available from their website: <https://www.tompkinssquare.com/>.

Artists include The New Orleans Nite Owls, The Mound City Blue Blowers, Sylvester Weaver, Bix and his Rhythm Jugglers and many others. If you like music/recordings from this era, this will be a treasure trove!



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## CURLEY MUSGRAVE & BELINDA GAIL

*"Forever West" - 2008*



The passing in 2009 of the immensely talented Curley Musgrave brought a sudden, sad end to one of the most astonishing vocal teamings ever to appear in Western or any other musical genre, for that matter. As solo artists Curley and Belinda had

enjoyed strong fan followings. But when they joined efforts, they surpassed the creative stratosphere.

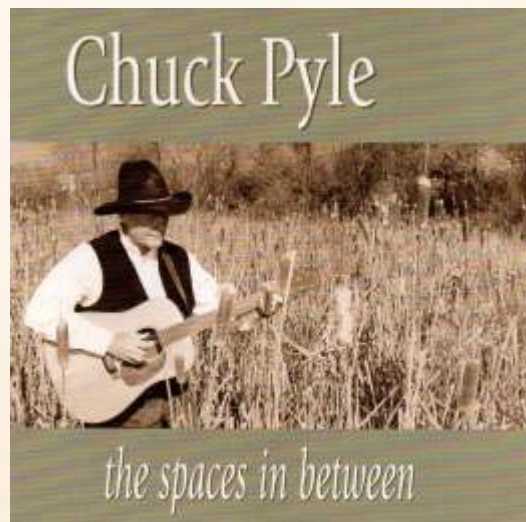
We've singled out one of their three releases, their final one, but all are superior fare. It is generally acknowledged they "discovered" each other when Curley stepped onstage to back Belinda during one of the Cowboys Heroes & Friends concerts in Branson, a moment we were privileged to have witnessed. There they began to discover the level of intuitive focus they manifested as a team or, more accurately, collaborating solo artists. From there, it was full steam ahead. The album "When Trails Meet" was first, then came the award-winning "Red Rock Moon." "Forever West" beautifully showed off their soaring harmonies and intricate, creatively electric arrangements. The wonderful medley "I'll Twine 'Midst The Ringlets/Wildwood Flower/For Loving Me" is here, the heartfelt "This Cowboy's Missing You" and "Wheels," romping versions of "Texas Plains" and "Roly Poly" that crackle with enthusiasm! Happily prime examples of their stage performances are living on thanks to the internet. And tracks from all of their albums deserve to continue receiving airplay and download.

## CHUCK PYLE

*"The Spaces In Between" - 2010*

Intensely respected by professionals and "those in the know," the late and undeniably great singer/songwriter Chuck Pyle was never in better voice with better original material than he was with this album. His imprint ("label," if you will) was called "Zen Cowboy Records." His words reflect that. This CD's production (by John McVey) and arrangements reaffirm it as well.

Songs like "Beckoning Sky," "Yellowstone," the free spirit of "Wide Open," the sweetly funky novelty "Pickin' Out My Outfit" and even the one called "Surfin'" take you to a very original place in your head. To hear Pyle weave his spell is to become addicted to him, as many can attest. As much as any Western/Americana artist you're apt to find, Chuck Pyle was one of a kind. His was certainly the ability to transfix audiences from house concert size to a house of thousands. His legacy is to have provided us with a treasure chest full of songs that are little worlds to fall into. Happily, more and more of them (beyond just the frequently selected "Far Side Of The Hill") are being covered by others these days, which is as it should be.



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## WESTERN MUSIC

### Top 15 Western Albums

- 1 Doug Figgs – Storm on the Mountain
- 2 Aspen Black – Roundin' Up Strays
- 3 Birdie Nichols – Western Heritage
- 4 Chris Guenther – Forces of Nature
- 5 Mark Lynn Young – A Cowboy By Choice
- 6 Dan Canyon Band – Hombre
- 7 Brenn Hill – The West Money Couldn't Buy
- 8 Dave Stamey – Porch Music
- 9 The Arizona Wildflowers
- 10 The Timberline Cowboys – Spirits of the High Desert
- 11 Joel White – Roads & Barbwire
- 12 John Lowell & Joanne Gardner Lowell – On My Way Home
- 13 R.W. Hampton – My Country
- 14 Larry Cann – Songsmith
- 15 Ryan Fritz – Just Keepin' it Ranchy

### Top 15 Western Songs

- 1 Kerry Grombacher – Cowboy Heart
- 2 Aspen Black – Generations Riding Through His Veins
- 3 Doug Figgs – Cowgirl From Illinois
- 4 Larry Cann – Cowboy's Hands
- 5 RW Hampton – Who
- 6 Patty Clayton – So Many Cowboys
- 7 Aspen Black – E-Town Road
- 8 Jon Chandler – The Western Road
- 9 Carol Markstrom – Juniper and Sage
- 10 Birdie Nichols – Burnin' Daylight
- 11 The Timberline Cowboys – Whispers on the Wind
- 12 Randy Palmer – Cowboy
- 13 The Timberline Cowboys – Ghosts of the Gallows
- 14 Shaza Leigh – Cowgirls Heart
- 15 Carol Markstrom – Trickster Wind

# CLEARMS

## Top 15 Western Artists (Catalog)

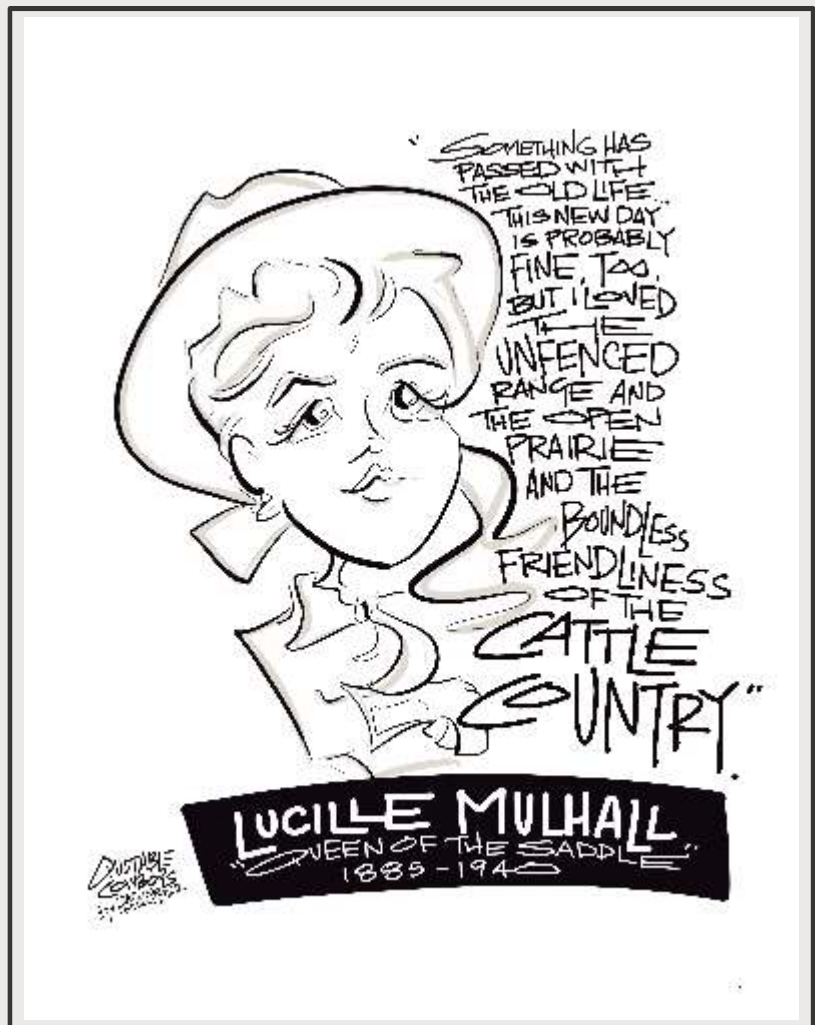
- 1 Dave Stamey
- 2 Carlos Washington
- 3 Ron Christopher
- 4 Jean Prescott
- 5 Ed Meyer
- 6 Clint Bradley
- 7 Allen & Jill Kirkham
- 8 Kristyn Harris
- 9 Casey & Reader
- 10 John Lowell
- 11 Patty Clayton
- 12 RJ Vandygriff
- 13 Marvin O'Dell
- 14 Kacey & Jenna
- 15 Susie Knight

## Top 15 Cowboy Poets

- 1 Sherl Cederburg
- 2 KC LaCourse
- 3 Floyd Beard
- 4 Danny McCurry
- 5 Duane Nelson
- 6 Mark Munzert
- 7 Rik Yonder Goodell
- 8 Teresa Burleson
- 9 JJ Steele
- 10 A.K. Moss
- 11 Eddy Leverett
- 12 Miska Paget
- 13 Tom Swearingen
- 14 Lindy Simmons
- 15 Jay Snider

## Top 10 Cowboy Poetry Albums

- 1 Sherl Cederburg – Wonder of the West
- 2 KC LaCourse – Dimestore Cowgirl
- 3 Danny McCurry – Thin Clean Air
- 4 Mark Munzert – Pensive & Playful
- 5 Rik Yonder Goodell – Cowboyin' With God
- 6 JJ Steele – Just Passin' Thru
- 7 Lindy Simmons – Range Rhymes
- 8 Floyd Beard – Horse Tales & Cow Trails
- 9 Miska Paget – Real Hands & Treasured Friends
- 10 Teresa Burleson – Between the Sun and the Moon



## HERE ARE THE DJs WHO SUBMITTED THEIR PLAYLISTS THIS QUARTER

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**Around the Campfire**  
**Marvin O'Dell**  
Sun City, AZ

**Around the Campfire**  
**Eddy Leverett**  
Cullman, AL

**Australian Country Countdown  
& Oz Radio Gold**  
**Shaza Leigh, Mark Eckel,  
& Peg Gilchrist**  
Tamworth, NSW Australia

**Blackdog Indie Country Radio**  
**Phil Kranz**  
Ringgold, GA

**Back at the Ranch**  
**Jarle Kvale**  
Belcourt, ND

**Bus of Real Country**  
**Janice Brooks**  
Pleasant Gap, PA

**Cowboy Corral**  
**JJ Steele**  
Westcliffe, CO

**Cowboy Tracks**  
**Nancy Flagg**  
Davis, CA

**Circuit Rider Roundup**  
**Allen & Jill Kirkham**  
Custer, SD

**Cowboy Radio Ride**  
**"Tuck" (Kevin Tuckfield)**  
Mountain View, AR

**Cowtrails**  
**Barb Richart**  
Mancos, CO

**Folk Tapestry**  
**Joe Angel**  
La Grange, TX

**Golden Graham's Western Hour**  
**Graham Lees**  
Surrey, UK

**Hearts of the West**  
**KC LaCourse**  
Las Vegas, NV

**Keepers of the West**  
**Doug Figgs and Reese Janca**  
Socorro, NM

**Outwest Hour**  
**Bobbi Jean Bell**  
Placitas, NM

**Party Central Radio**  
**Candy Cane**  
The Netherlands

**Paul Hazell's World of Country**  
**Paul Hazell**  
Uckfield, UK

**Rogue Valley Bound**  
**Skip Bessonette & Gene Miles**  
Medford, OR

**Strays at the Gate**  
**Joel White**  
Guthrie, TX

**Tombstone Every Mile**  
**Ken Ward**  
Albuquerque, NM

**Traditionally Yours**  
**Kent Thompson**  
Chickasha, OK

**Western Air Waves**  
**Aspen Black**  
Roanoke, VA

**Whittler's Corner**  
**Butch & Christina Martin**  
Grant Pass, OR

**Western Music Time**  
**OJ Sikes**  
Redding, CA

**Western Way Hour**  
**Susie Knight**  
Conifer, CO



## ON THE AIR by Aspen Black

After doing an excellent job of creating and compiling the charts for many years, Marvin O'Dell handed over the reins to me. Please thank Marvin for his years of hard work and vision! Marvin wrote in the last issue of the Western Way that changes to the charts were coming. However, instead of a decline from numerical rankings to "Most Played", numerical credibility has been restored. For those who have always wondered how the charts work, and/or what to expect in the future, below is a summary of IWMA board-approved changes:



1. All categories are "Top \_\_\_" now. Artists, you may post/use your numerical ranking however you like.
2. Added: "Top 15 Western Artists (catalog)" category. This tracks all music plays prior to current award eligibility years. Added: "Top 15 Cowboy Poets" category. This tracks all poetry plays, regardless of release year. This also gives a place for poetry "singles" to count.
3. Cowboy/Western album and Western Swing album charts are combined into one chart and reduced to 15. The Western Songs chart is increased to 15. The Cowboy Poetry Album chart is reduced to 10.
4. Each artist/song/poem is verified as lyrically "western" (in accordance with the definition on the IWMA home page) before being added to the tracking database and each play is coded with the radio show's name and date of broadcast. A copy of all tallied plays is filed with the IWMA office at the end of every quarter for verification and transparency.
5. Content: as before, albums with 50% or less western content will not be tracked.
6. Artist/DJ's – Marvin had a policy in place to ensure fairness: only one play per week per song and one play per album per week counts from an Artist/DJ playing his or her own work. This remains in effect so that no Artist/DJ can skew the charts in his or her favor.
7. Ties: album ties are broken by highest number of plays of the most played song on the album. Song and poetry album ties are broken by the newest release date. Overall poets and artist (catalog) ties are broken by the most plays by different DJ's.
8. Eligible plays: counted from verified playlists by human DJ's only. No "auto-DJ" plays are counted.

Phase 2 changes propose to add more DJ's to the IWMA network, try to get playlists from IWMA DJ's not currently submitting, share digital releases with IWMA DJ's needing CDs, add a newsletter & convention workshop for DJ's, and spotlight a DJ or share information of interest to DJ's and/or artists with regards to radio in the space that this article now occupies.

**Attention Djs!** Your contributions to The Western Way charts are welcomed.

Please send your playlist, including the song and the CD on which it appears, to [aspen@aspenblackcowgirl.com](mailto:aspen@aspenblackcowgirl.com).



# Book Nook Reviews & More

BY KAREN CAMPBELL



If you would like to have your western fiction, nonfiction or poetry book reviewed, send a copy to:  
Karen Campbell, 1762 County Road 121, Gainsville, TX 76240. Submissions will not be returned.

## PROCESS & PRODUCT

One of the most common topics we discuss in writing classes is the difference between the process of writing and the product of writing. It is easy to become so focused on one that the other gets neglected. Some writers become consumed with producing a finished poem as quickly as possible, while others get caught in endless planning and never finish anything. Strong writing requires attention to both. The writing process is often recursive rather than linear. Writers move back and forth between stages, repeating steps as new ideas emerge. While models vary, the process typically includes brainstorming, organizing ideas, drafting, revising, and finally publishing or sharing the work.

When cowboy poets talk about their writing practices, the process often begins with inspiration. There is certainly value in those moments. Inspiration can be powerful. However, active idea generation can be just as rewarding and often produces work that is every bit as authentic. Waiting for inspiration is only one way to begin writing. Writers have many tools available for generating ideas. Listing, mapping, journaling, freewriting, and asking purposeful questions about a topic can all uncover material worth exploring. These techniques give writers more options than simply waiting for the next idea to strike. They also encourage experimentation and can lead to subjects and perspectives that might not emerge through inspiration alone.

Once ideas have been generated, organization becomes important. This is another step that is frequently overlooked. Many writers simply start writing and discover the poem as they go. Sometimes that approach works well. However, taking time to consider structure can open up possibilities that might otherwise be missed. A writer can think about rhyme scheme, line length, meter, the number of verses, the use of a chorus or refrain, and the overall movement of the poem. They can decide what message they want readers or listeners to take away and how best to guide an audience toward that conclusion.

This kind of planning does not restrict creativity; it often enhances it. By making intentional decisions about structure

and organization, writers gain more freedom to shape the experience they want their audience to have. Some of the most carefully crafted and memorable poems emerge from this stage of thoughtful preparation.

After planning comes drafting and revision. Drafting is where ideas begin to take shape on the page, but revision is where writing often becomes truly effective. In inspiration-driven writing practices, revision is sometimes skipped. A poet captures the moment, writes the poem, and considers it finished. While that approach can preserve spontaneity, it can also leave opportunities unexplored.

Revision is one of the most important steps in the writing process because it shifts the focus from the writer to the audience. Early drafts are often written for ourselves. They help us discover what we think, feel, and want to say. Revision asks a different question: How will someone else experience these words? In that sense, revision is an act of empathy. It requires writers to step away from their own perspective and consider the needs of their readers or listeners. Are the images clear? Does the story make sense? Is every line doing useful work? Will the audience understand what matters most? By asking these questions, writers make smarter choices and create work that connects more effectively with others.

Ultimately, publishing, or in the case of cowboy writing, sharing and performing, is not simply about displaying what we have written. It is about communicating with an audience. When writers focus only on getting words on paper and sharing them immediately, the emphasis remains on the writer. When they embrace the full writing process, especially revision, the emphasis shifts toward the audience and the experience they will have with the work.

Cowboy poetry has always been rooted in community, storytelling, and shared experience. The writing process helps ensure that those stories reach audiences in the clearest and most meaningful way possible. Inspiration may start a poem, but thoughtful drafting, revision, and attention to audience are often what make it memorable. 

## PENSIVE & PLAYFUL

### THE COWBOY POETRY OF MARK MUNZERT

2025. Poppa Mac Inc  
Paperback  
\$20.00  
108 pp

Paperback available on Amazon

Pensive 'N' Playful is Mark Munzert's 2025 collection of 47 poems of varying lengths, demonstrating both depth and a refreshing willingness to move beyond some of the traditional confines of perfect rhyme, quatrain structure, and expected subject matter. The poems are arranged alphabetically and are preceded by a one-page introduction by Del Shields, host of RFD-TV's The Best of America by Horseback. The volume concludes with a brief biographical note on Munzert, along with reviews from Poppa Mac MacKay and Patty Clayton. A handful of black-and-white images accompany selected poems, with appropriate credits provided where applicable. Most of the poems in the collection carry a thoughtful and fittingly "pensive" tone. They often focus on a single event, image, or moment, using it as a lens through which to convey a larger message. Munzert's poetry possesses a distinctive voice marked by staccato phrasing that creates a unique and often playful rhythm, particularly in poems such as "High N' Low." He also makes effective use of repetition and alliteration, enhancing both the musicality and momentum of his work. His willingness to experiment with couplets, triplets, and well-placed half rhymes further broadens the collection's stylistic range.

The shifting perspectives employed in "He, She, Me" are especially engaging, particularly when readers discover the identity of the speaker. Other standout poems include "Bronc's Life," "Composition," "Felt Morning, Straw Afternoon," "I Should, I Could, If Only," "Leather Bound," "Medicine Show," and "There's a Place."

While the collection is largely suitable for a general audience, one or two poems contain playful innuendo that may not be appropriate for the youngest readers or listeners. Overall, Pensive 'N' Playful is one of the most enjoyable poetry collections I have read in some time, and I recommend it to both poetry readers and performers alike.

**KAREN GRACE BROWN CAMPBELL** has been writing, reading, and performing primarily western and Christian poetry for over 25 years. She is also a wife and a mother of a wonderful little girl. She breeds horses and runs barrels as well as serving as an Associate Dean and English Professor at Grayson College and has taught at other colleges and universities. She has her PhD from Texas Tech and an MA from Baylor University in Literature, specifically medieval literature (cowboys and knights have a lot in common). You may contact Karen at [CampbellK@grayson.edu](mailto:CampbellK@grayson.edu).

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# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

*by Marvin O'Dell*

...The Honoree for this year's once-a-year fundraiser gala held in the Ft. Worth Stockyards in March was our own **Janet McBride**. For over 20 years on at least one Sunday each month, Janet drove to the stockyards and volunteered to work with The Buckaroos, a group of kids who were learning how to play, sing, and yodel songs like "Home on the Range", "You Are My Sunshine", and other classic tunes. It was a labor of love that has paid long-range dividends.

...**Rick Norcross**, longtime bandleader of Rick & The All-Star Ramblers Western Swing Band, has been named to the 2026 Heroes of Western Swing Hall of Fame by the Cowtown Society of Western Music. Rick is a singer/songwriter based in Burlington, VT who led the seven-piece band The All Star Ramblers; he recently retired from music after playing more than 1,000 shows over a 60-year span. He wrote and released "You Can't Make It Up," a song about attending the 1962 Hardwick Academy Junior Prom where the only place to buy a corsage was the town funeral home. That song went on to be honored by the Academy of Western Artists as "Western Swing Song of the Year."

...In April of 2024, **Barry Ward** was first introduced and recognized by the Kansas Senate for his lifelong achievements in the performing arts and music. This year, Senator Ron Ryckman and Senate Majority Leader Chase Blasi have continued the quest to make him Kansas' Official Balladeer! This is the first time that title and honor have been bestowed on a Kansas performer!

...**R.W. Hampton** will be appearing in the role of General Nelson Miles in the upcoming film by Award-winning Ken Spurgeon titled *Under the Painted Sky*. A fall release is anticipated. Others starring in the film include Buck Taylor, Mary McDonough, Darby Hinton, and Wyatt McCrea. In May, R.W. released his first album in over a decade, titled *My Country*.

...It's been almost five years in the making, but **Miss Devon & the Outlaw** have a new CD coming out in June. Be watching for *Jumpin' Pews and Shoutin' Hallelujah*, their new gospel project that is according to them "near 'n dear to our hearts and hope it will be for you, too." For more information, go to [www.missdevonandtheoutlaw.com](http://www.missdevonandtheoutlaw.com).

...Sisters Ranelle, Brie, Aspen, and Isley of **The Arizona Wildflowers** have qualified for the 2026 Junior NFR and Junior World Rodeo Championships in Las Vegas, NV. The event takes place in December in conjunction with the National Finals Rodeo. The girls have also been invited to open the event with their rendition of The National Anthem. Isley, 9, qualified in 12 and Under Goat Tying on her infamous pony Black Beauty. Aspen, 14, qualified in 19 and Under Goat Tying and Barrel Racing. Brie, 16, qualified in 19 and Under Barrel Racing, Breakaway Roping, and Goat Tying. Ranelle, 17, qualified in 19 and Under Pole Bending. Ranelle also started her own apparel company earlier this year, appropriately named Horse Cult.

...The eight-song album *End of the Trail* by southern California guitarist and singer **David Volk** has been called by CD reviewer Roland Sturm "my favorite release of 2025." Produced and arranged by Marty Rifkin, the album is supported by some of Southern California's finest musicians.

...It's been an amazing first quarter for **Dave Stamey**. He performed with Post Malone in February, recorded a new album in Nashville produced by Michele Capps and Rex Allen Jr., and on March 18, he played the Grand Ole Opry for the first time!

...**Dan Crow** has a new album coming out in July called *Mrs. Antrim's Boy*. He has been working on the project for two years, and it is about to come to fruition.

...**Kristyn Harris** will release a new gospel album, *Give Me Jesus*, in June. It will be available on CD and all digital platforms. Also, her mustang mare, Velvet, that she adopted from the wild and trained (and who has been featured with her in magazines, newspapers, documentaries, and on American Idol), has given birth to her first foal, a colt she has named "Teddy." Kristyn's husband Aarom was awarded a Wrangler Award from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum as producer for **Brenn Hill's** newest album, *The West That Money Couldn't Buy*.

... Packing up his bride, Audrey, and his Australian Shepherd Mazie and waving good-bye to Montana, **Rik "Yonder" Goodell** has relocated with his family

to their new residence in Prescott Valley, AZ. Rik also was recently in Fort Smith, AR for the book launch of *Hard Country*, (fund raiser for the U.S. Marshals Survivors Benefit Fund) an anthology in which he was honored to have his poem, "Die First - Then Quit" included.

...**David Smith** hosted the fifth annual Waxahachie Cowboy Gathering in the beautiful historic Sims Library Lyceum in April. Poets and musicians were Smith along with **Miss Devon and the Outlaw, Grace Partridge, Dave Hansford, and Teresa Burleson**. David also won 3rd place in the Irene Emerson Poetry Writing Contest held at Sims Library, May 1 in Waxahachie

...**E. Joe Brown** recently sent the first draft of his new novel, *A Cowboy's Venture*, to his publisher. He will be in St. Louis, MO at the Western Writers Conference in June; in July in Duncan, OK at the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center for The Day of the Cowboy; and in October in Eureka Springs, AR at the Ozark Literary Festival.

...**Allen and Jill Kirkham** were pleased to celebrate the 5th Anniversary in May of their Circuit Riders Roundup with Allen&Jill on American Cowboy Radio with a special anniversary show. They are grateful to Ben Parks for five great years of Executive Production on their IWMA award-winning show.

...**Aspen Black**, current IWMA-TN Chapter president, has begun hosting a once-a-month "western music preferred, but open to all styles" open mic at Lakehill Vineyard in Calloway, VA under the aegis of the IWMA-TN Chapter. She's also seeking a venue in the Nashville area for hosting an open mic, contrasting with the more common writers' nights at area venues.

...As of mid-May "back east", **Mark Munzert** has brought his poetic parlance and "rhymical reciting" to 22 senior residences, three libraries, and the renowned Buttonball Barn, a year-round home for artists and music lovers alike with warm hospitality and a very engaged audience.

...Oregon cowboy poet **Tom Swearingen** and the group **Cowboy Jazz** have been in the studio recording a new album titled *Postcards of Oregon*. The tracks are the quartet's compositions incorporating new poems by Tom. This will be their second album collaboration.

...**Micki Fuhrman**, a 2022 Western Writers of America Spur winner and finalist for Best Original Western Song, won this year's short fiction category with *Point of Impact*, published under her Vonn McKee pen name in Silverado Press Presents Volume 1: *Western Stories by Today's Top Writers*

(Silverado Press and Crazy 8 Press).

...**R.J. Vandygriff** was cast in the lead role for a promotional video produced by Green Buzz Agency. He was also invited to participate in a virtual "Stars Spangled Banner" choir in honor of our nation's 250th Anniversary. The director selected one singer from all 50 states.

...In May, J. Michael Mullins and Geary Parsons, **The Timberline Cowboys**, released a new CD titled *Spirits of the High Desert*. They are currently prepping for a showcase sponsored by the IWMA Colorado Chapter in Mancos, CO on July 18. During the summer, they will be splitting time between rehearsal and the studio working on a special new project.

...The radio show *Cowboy Radio Ride with 2025 Program and DJ of the Year Kevin Tuckfield* expanded this year to include six options for listening. You can email Tuck at [kevintuckfield@gmail.com](mailto:kevintuckfield@gmail.com) for scheduling information. Tuck has also released two new songs this year: "A Thing About Swing" and one called "Trust in the Lord (But Tie Up Your Horse)", co-written with **Doug Figgs**.

...**Merel Bregante** has just finished working with John and Joanne Lowell for their debut album titled *On My Way Home*. He will also be working on projects with **Randy Palmer**, a new album from **Aspen Black**, and some new music from **Joel Alden White**. He also reports that **Sarah Pierce** will have a new single coming out soon.

...**Doug Figgs** received the first Mary Ryland Western Music Award from the New Mexico Music Awards for the song "Cowboy's Legacy", co-written with **Floyd Beard** and recorded and produced by **Peter "Ren" Renfree**. Doug is also working on a new album with Peter at 8 South Studio in Alamogordo, NM.

...In April, **Dan McCorison** enjoyed a double honor when he received the Phoenix (AZ) West Valley Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year AND Musician of the Year Awards.

...Come to the historic town of San Juan Bautista (CA) for "Western Wednesday Acoustic Open Mic" hosted by IWMACC member **Cisco Jim**. The show is held on the second Wednesday of every month, from 5:00 - 8:00pm at The Pizza Factory in the Windmill Market Shopping Center in Old San Juan.

*Continued on next page...*

...**Claudia Nygaard** has wrapped up recording of her new album *To Race the Wind* and is now working on the artwork for the CD and lining up the release to radio and press. She has also been busy as co-producer of a benefit for Musician's Health Alliance in Nashville that she was a part of in June. The benefit was a tribute to legendary songwriter Guy Clark and features Clark's co-writers performing the songs they wrote with him.

...Doug Green from **Riders In The Sky** reported that the band, over its 48½-year career, has made over 8,000 appearances. They've spent the winter and spring as guests on others' recordings and have a double-bill booked with **The Sons of the Pioneers** in November.

...**The Western Troubadours** (Aspen Black & Kerry Grombacher) showcased in South Bend, IN in early June at a Folk Alliance Regional Midwest (FARM) spin-off event called "FARM-ette." The duo booked a "two concerts and a creative writing workshop" deal with IndyFolk and the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis back in the summer 2024, and they are planning to book more appearances in the Hoosier State.

...**Peggy Malone** writes that a play her daughter Beth wrote during Covid lockdown is right now premiering in New Hope, PA. It is getting great reviews, and Broadway is on the Horizon. The play is titled *Starstruck*. The New York Times has done a whole page write-up on Beth's work.

...While work on her new poetry book is coming along nicely, **Lindy Simmons** reports that she's "purty durn proud" that her grandson AJ is in great demand as a roper at area roping events and, at 15 years of age, has a regular ranch job. Her granddaughter Samantha is becoming quite good at leather work, making extra money for college by making leather items.

...**Aspen & James Black's** son, **Riley Black** recently earned his private pilot's license and is now working toward his instrument rating. He is a junior at Liberty University intending to become a commercial airline pilot. **Alice Black** just finished her first year of college as a business major with a 4.0 GPA. Her long-term boyfriend, Israel Parish, graduated from medical school in May and is beginning a 3-year residency as an ER doctor at Lewis Gale Hospital in Salem, VA.

...**Mark and Kathy Munzert** have some things going on in their family. Mark's oldest son, Ryan, just got married. Kathy's daughter is expecting a baby boy. And their youngest son, Max, recently took a job as a recording engineer with Dreamland Recording Studios. 🐾

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## THE COWBOY RADIO RIDE SHOW

Hosted By  
Kevin "Tuck" Tuckfield

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**FOR 2025 DJ/PROGRAM OF THE YEAR**

**COWBOY RADIO RIDE**

**AND IWMA #1 SONG "WHY HE RIDES" SUMMER CHARTS 2025**

**2025 NOMINATED SONG OF THE YR - WHY HE RIDES**

**#1 SONG ON THE AUSTRALIAN CHARTS SEPT 2025 - WHY HE RIDES**

**#1 SONG ON NASHVILLE PROMO CHARTS MAY 2025 - WHY HE RIDES**

**COMING TO NATIONAL CASHBOX INDIE CHARTS 2026 - WHY HE RIDES**

**NEW RELEASE - "TRUST IN THE LORD BUT TIE UP YOUR HORSE"**

WRITTEN BY TUCK - KEVIN TUCKFIELD AND DOUG "FARRIER" FIGGS

# SAMPLING THE SINGLES

... continued from page. 28

Okay, we'll give the Western nod "yes" to **Go On 'n' Fly** from the group **Leavin' Page Town**. Its 'say yes to your dreams' message starts it down the trail. Then it bids you to "dream as big as Texas." Its chorus says "like a tumbleweed across the plains, you never know when the winds might change." It's sort of a Cowboy Word Count thing.

Vocally there is a bit of Connie Francis in the delivery of Irish lass **Lauren Eva Rose** as she bemoans her **Three Way Love Affair**. The Francis aspect shows up prominently in her 'trail-off' note releases that help add that critical teardrop aspect to the proceedings. The medium tempo Country Swing release should help you dance through your angst.

Subtitled "Raised On Treaty 4 Land," **Teagan Littlechief's** newest one is two things: Country Rock with a capital CR and one Native American part of the Western story. In **Rezzified** she shuns 'neon' trappings opting for "beads and ribbon skirts and the stories that they bring" and "roots that run deep like buffalo grass." That does run deep.

Okay, its existence should be noted. The **New Indians Showband** isn't "Indian." They're Irish. The history of The Indians Showband (founded by the new lead singer's grandfather) dates from 1963. **The Wig Wam Medley** is bits of hits. With more no-no terms like "squaw" and pronouncing "Wam" like "jam," dance cautiously at this bonfire.

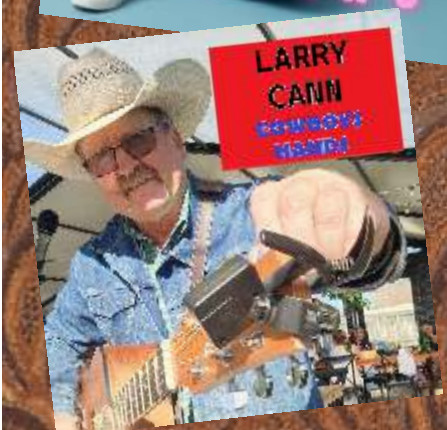
Former Music Row Independent Artist Of The Year **Eric Lee Beddingfield** returns to the trenches, or actually tops a number of them, with the Country Swinger **Too Much Lonesome**. Hitting #1, #2 and Top Ten (as this one has on various charts) is a fair indicator a song has something going for it. And it wraps with "hop in the truck, Dog!"

If Marty Robbins' "El Paso City" that only has him flying over the place is considered 'Western,' then we'd better include **El Paso Tonight** from the band **Stormland Rising**. He's in Fort Worth, she has gone to Arizona, he's proposing reconciling in you-guessed it. Beside all the western locales they also threw in "the border moon." Okay, it's 'in.'

The correct beat and twin fiddle effect it has, steel it doesn't, so 'Country' Swing it is. **K-I-S-S-I-N-G** from Ireland's **John McNichol** was first a slow-to-connect hit for Rhett Akin back in 1996. McNichol reports he and the band love playing this one because it really propels the dancers to the floor, so he really enjoys being a professional mover!

Australia's **Larry Cann** has called on his own cowboy background and inspiration from his writing partner Scott Barrier as they focus on the **Cowboy's Hands**. "The cowboy's hands are the heart of the man," Cann actually uttered, and the team was off and running, "ridin,' ropin,' wearin' the brand." A hit could be within their grasp! Handily!

Continued on page 47...



# A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

BY JOHNNY D. BOGGS

## ANATOMY OF THE VIRGINIAN

I have a first edition of Owen Wister's novel *The Virginian*. Well, it's the 16th printing, December 1902, not in the greatest condition, but it came with a "Bible Marker" from James Pott & Company, a well-respected New York City publisher of Bibles and such from the 1880s and into the 1920s.

Released by MacMillan at the end of May 1902 – and promoted heavily during the months before – *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains* had sold 175,000 copies by the end of the year, garnering rave reviews.

The *Chicago Post* called it "throughout soundly American, often exciting, often humorous and always interesting." "The vanished West is made to live again by Owen Wister in a manner which makes his book easily the best that deals with the cowboy and the cattle country," *The Philadelphia Press* reported.

A franchise was born.

The next year, with book sales at 250,000, Wister and playwright Kirke La Shelle cowrote a play based on Wister's novel. Advertised as

"Interpreted by a Genuine Superior Company, and Equipped With Atmosphere Scenery and a Wealth of Beautiful Effects," *The Virginian* had a long run nationwide. The first documented production was in Boston in October 1903, and it debuted on Broadway's Manhattan Theatre on January 5, 1904.



*The Virginian* 1929 Cooper Poster

"The play has been before the public for nearly seven years," *The (Rochester, New York) Union and Advertiser* reported on April 1, 1911, "and has lost none of its attractiveness .... 'The Virginian' has played eleven different engagements in New York city, while Chicago has seen it seven times, Philadelphia and Boston have greeted it with large audiences four different times, and its popularity is nowhere on the wane."

The first film adaptation came in 1914 with Dustin Farnum in the title role. A remake followed in 1923 with Kenneth Harlan as the nameless hero. Gary Cooper got the title role in the first sound version in 1929, with Walter Huston chewing up scenery as badman Trampas.

When Wister died from a brain hemorrhage on July 21, 1938, at age 78, the novel had sold 1.5

million copies, yet The Buffalo (New York) News noted "Owen Wister was not interested in its financial success. He was primarily an artist."

We don't know what Wister thought about the film versions of his best-known work, but The Buffalo News said he "felt that his critical essays were most worthy of immortality."

The Virginian lived on. In 1946, Joel McCrea played the hero in the first color film version of Wister's novel. Bill Pullman got the title role in a 2000 made-for-TV film.

The best remembered Virginian, however, is James Drury, who took the part in NBC's TV series from 1962-1971, the last season titled The Men from Shiloh.



The Virginian - 1923 - Lobby Card

"We were the first 90-minute show with continuing characters, and we were the only one that was successful," Drury told me in 2000.

But it was not an easy job.

"It was logistically a nightmare," Drury said. "We would shoot 74 minutes and 30 seconds worth of film in an average of eight days... So lots of time we had three and four units shooting three or four different Virginian episodes at the same time on the back lot. We would literally get on horseback and ride back and forth between the sets. Run in and say a few words here, and run in and say a few words there, and then come back over here and do an enormous 10- or 12-page scene in another episode and then go to another set and do another big 10-page scene. So, it was very confusing to my horse."

There's another side to Wister, though. He wasn't limited to prose. That long-running play he cowrote included a song, "Ten Thousand Cattle Straying (Dead Broke)," written by Wister, perhaps in 1888 on one of his trips to Wyoming.

*Ten thousand cattle straying,  
They quit my range and travell'd away,  
And it's 'sons-of-guns' is what I say,  
I am dead broke, dead broke this day.  
Dead broke.*

Yes, those lyrics might sound familiar, but historians like Katie Lee, author of *Ten Thousand [Mama would tan my hide if I did not abbreviate this] G-D Cattle: A History of the American Cowboy in Song, Story and Verse*, aren't sure if Wister heard cowboys singing "Ten Thousand G-D Cattle" on one of his trips to Wyoming, or if cowboys heard Wister's song and doctored it up a mite.

The Virginian lives on. Wister's novel remains in print, and back in 2022, a new stage adaptation, written by L.C. Bernadine and Spencer Huffman and directed by Terry McCabe, ran at Chicago's City Lit Theater Company.

Sorry, Zane Grey, but all of this is why Owen Wister is often called "the father of Western fiction" – which I hope to address next time around.



Postcard dated 1906, promoting stage play of The Virginian, written by Owen Wister and Kike LaShelle



The Virginian window display taken for Union Theatres



**JOHNNY D. BOGGS**, a native of South Carolina and former newspaper journalist, is a Western novelist/historian, film scholar, photographer and sometimes lyricist who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He has won a record ten Spur Awards from Western Writers of America for his fiction and writes for several magazines. His website is [www.JohnnyDBoggs.com](http://www.JohnnyDBoggs.com).

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**Winner: "Roads and Barbwire"**  
by Joel White

**Finalist: "Cowboy's Legacy"**  
by Doug Figgs and Floyd Beard

**Finalist: "Somewhere Green"**  
by Jim Jones and  
Deanna Dickinson McCall

2027 Spur Awards submissions  
are available at [WesternWriters.org](http://WesternWriters.org)  
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Awards are for Western-themed songs,  
poems, books, articles, etc. that are  
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# THE WESTERN WORLD TOUR

by Rick Huff

**Western Music** is most often acoustic in its core instrumentation. Its lyrics are typically about the lives, loves, lore, locales, legends and legacy of the old and new West, its peoples or Cowboyboying worldwide.

First, “Western Sightings” in advertising. A cowboy in a weather slicker heads into the elements. His wife in a rocker by the fire frets for his safety. He assures her he’s only goin’ out to the porch to fetch his Cologard Colon Test kit!! The online medical service Zocdoc had its message delivered by a pair of “conversing” livestock auctioneers. One of the former DHS Secretary’s notorious TV ads featured ‘Noem On The Range.’ Another ad has a rough-looking guy galloping with fellow bandidos to mount a vintage train and do their thing. He loses his hat but pulls out his iphone to order hair control (and chafing balm) from Amazon. Relief is dropped to their campsite, so in this fanciful West ‘ladronés’ get served by ‘la drone!’ An ad says “even cowboys get heartburn” and Roloids cowboy up to help cowboy urp. And for Philadelphia Cream Cheese a steer-riding wrangler called “Phillyboy” does his fondue diligence improving cheese bowls across the land. How did they miss naming him “Philly The Kid?!!”

Now a hard right turn. Artificial Intelligence is with us and more of it is coming. I wondered what it’s coming to do ‘for’ or ‘to’ Western. With the help of David Nidel, I decided to interview the spooky machinery. How ‘artificially intelligent’ would its answers about us be for anyone asking? Soon most will turn to AI rather than to any of us. The selected interviewees are “ChatGBT,” “Gemini,” “Claude,” “CoPilot Azure AI” and “Britannica AI.” Tasks we posed included “Define Western by subject,” “Explain Western/Cowboy Music vs. Country Music,” “Name some current Western Music performers/Cowboy Poets,” “Create Western song lyrics,” “Create Cowboy Poetry” and “Show how can we make people more aware of Western.” Their answers were illuminating to say the least.

For space, we’ll abridge representative responses. First, AI has a basically accurate understanding of Cowboy Music content. ‘Chat GBT’ says “the Western music genre...developed in the American West in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (It is) closely related to Country Music but (has) its own distinct themes and sound.” It cites “cowboys, ranch life, open landscapes, horses, outlaws and frontier life.” And it lists influences as “Folk, Spanish and Mexican, Cowboy work (in) frontier ballads (with) vivid stories about life in the west (using) simple melodies and acoustic instruments.” But in differentiating Western from Country it claims the music is “closely tied to old films” and its “key figure is Gene Autry.” Significant, and we’ll get to that. ‘Claude’ offered original Western song lyrics, titling them “Dust and Whiskey.” An

excerpt: The sun sets low on a lonesome trail/where the coyotes cry and the cold winds wail/I’ve got nothin’ but my horse and my old six-string/and the ghost of a love that don’t mean a thing/ [Chorus] Pour me dust and whiskey, let the fire burn low/I’m just a drifter, baby, with nowhere left to go/The stars don’t ask no questions, the desert tells no lies/I’ll ride until the morning paints the

eastern skies. Grabbing from the same saddlebag of images ‘Chat GBT’ followed a similar trail. An excerpt: Dust on my boots, sun sinkin’ low/trail winds on where the coyotes go/got a heart full of miles/a past I can’t outrun/chasin’ that line where the sky meets the sun. “Write a Cowboy Poem,” we commanded. ‘CoPilot’ offered “Dust On The Horizon:” The sun sets low on a western sky/my shadow rides long where the coyotes cry/boots beat time to the creak of the saddle/chasing the wind in a slow dusk battle/the herd moves steady through the sagebrush gray/stars wait patient for the close of day/and I reckon the trail’s the only home I own/just me, my horse and the great unknown. Art notwithstanding, AI does seem to ‘get’ Western by content. But when asked to list examples of today’s Western performers and Cowboy Poets, a problem arose. AI is NOT finding our folks!! Y’know, most of the ones the IWMA has awarded annually since 1989 and who grace our magazine’s covers. AI lists classic 1930s and ‘40s stars, Ian Tyson and Don Edwards. But the only contemporary people found consistently are Dave Stamey and occasionally RW Hampton (although one source lists him only as “R.W.”). If you feel AI’s just finding nationally promoted people, Michael Martin Murphey didn’t turn up either. ‘Chat GBT’ offered Cody Johnson, Sturgill Simpson, Turnpike Troubadours, Chris LeDoux (!) and Ryan Bingham. ‘Gemini’ threw in Charley Crockett (accurate), Colter Wall (accurate) and Coleman Jennings (less so). But you’ll also find such as Chris Stapleton, Miranda Lambert and Jelly Roll included through purported “adherence to values of ranch life and frontier adventure”?!! AI seems to understand Western, but not always how to apply it. Cowboy poets? Red Steagall and Mark Munzert show up, but others are mostly ‘history.’

Finally ChatGBT’s promotional advice: Western Music is rich in narratives. Make it known in a modern context and it stops feeling niche. Through podcasts and visual content use feeling and stories behind ballads, not lectures, to prove Western’s current relevance. It warns against treating it as a museum piece. Yet AI’s own examples are mostly from our past. Others aren’t Western. Maybe this exercise indicates where we have work to do.



... continued from page 28.

**JEFF GORE**  
"The Outlier"



Beyond considering its basic appeal of heart to voice - hands to solo guitar, the newest release from veteran performer

Jeff Gore is more than just "basically appealing." His soulful commitment to his material is genuine and stirring. It makes each track, no matter how familiar, take on fresh impact and relevance.

The collection is made up of originals and covers of classics. Picks among the former are Gore's own creations "Pride Of Our Land" (a tribute to The Cowboy) and "Wildflowers" (a profound song of longing and loss). I would include "Eduardo Garcia" (classic tack

maker) if not for an unfortunate outtake mastered into the first third of it, hopefully to be remedied before the album's general release. Pick covers are Don Edwards' "The Old Cowman," Joyce Woodson's "Cheyenne," classics "Whoopi Ti Yi Yo," "Border Affair" and Gore's acapella take of Walt LaRue's "Pretty Paulne" (that ending still sneaks up on me)!

Eighteen tracks total, very highly recommended.



**CHRIS GUENTHER**



"Forces Of Nature"

With his expressive baritone voice rendering a collection of original songs

and a poem, balladeer Chris Guenther gives us his tenth studio album and a fine one it is. The thoughtful arrangements lend a certain mythic/mystic Big West feel to the proceedings. It almost turns his subjects into displays in some grand museum of iconic Cowboy images. Insiders in particular will appreciate Guenther's knowledgeable lyrics.

Picks include the song that contains the title line "Round Pen" (first times and other times for the kid, the colt, the man and the horse); "Long Shot" (a played-out rodeo cowboy portrait); "Great Escape" (dogies looking for and finding the way out); "If Trails Could Talk" (what tales they could tell) and "A Cattleman's Song - Sixty-Five Years" (in the tradition of songs like "MC Horses" and "The Old Double Diamond"). We'll add the poem "Three Joes At Tensleep" and his instrumental "Above The Snakes" as well.

Some of this release is the stuff of legend and some of it is 'now.' But all of it is worth your investment of time and money. Very highly recommended, ten tracks total.



"I still have a smile on my face [Marvin], after reading about your new car experience!! Good Luck!! Enjoy! They should still have CD players!!! Just love this issue [Spring 2026], to see my buddies on the cover. Great writeup on Floyd and Valerie Beard!"

- Peggy Malone, CO

"I've been intending to write ever since the box of promo mags arrived. Jeezy Loweezy!! When you say you've got a new designer for the WW, you ain't foolin' around! Dynamic!"

- Rick Huff, NM

"Greetings from TX! Received our copy of Western Way and your new format is very attention grabber! Congratulations. See you in Albuquerque."

- Bill & Linda Strickler, TX

# SAMPLING THE SINGLES

... continued from page 41

Country Swing from Ireland once again! **Barry Owen** has put in nearly as much time playing in London as he has in his greener home. **Little Did I Know** is the first release of several coming from his newest album, so one suspects he will appear again in this column. The fiddle leads. There's no steel, but 'steel' your heart. You'll dance to it!

New Zealand instrumentalist **Phil Doublet** (pronounced "doo-blai") was doubly inspired as he watched a documentary on The Outback that showed "the raw freedom of the brumbies" (mustangs) around Mt. Kosciuszko. He first grabbed his acoustic guitar to create **Wild Heart**. His excitement turned 'electric,' so a Country Rocker galloped in.

More Country Swing from the Emerald Isle! **Trevor Loughrey** knows there's a joint just down the road, so **Honey Put Your Shoes On**. The beer is cold and the music is hot! The dance floor awaits and times 'a'wastin'! This doesn't quite contain the Western Swing criteria, but Country Swing is close enough for most. Fiddle does rule.

The Irish/Western connection is made in this one. **Home To Atherlow** was originally released by Louise Morrissey. This version from **Brian Mullen** again covers the Irish immigration to America and its singer's longing out on "the lonesome prairie." Even "the Kentucky moon" and "Frisco Bay" can't hold him. He's goin' back home.

Singer/songwriter **Ray Jones** brings us a mellow vision of what it's like to gaze up at Australia's **Northern Stars**. He and his mates have a campfire going in the outback "with a 'billy' boiling on the side." He hears his mother's songs from "Slim (Dusty) and Charley Pride." The song's producer Bill Chambers is camped there, too. Convenient!!

With a rhythm rather like 'Tiger By The Tail,' the Country Swinger from Irish artist **Stacey Breen** called **Foolin' Around** is also sort of a redemption song. For the moment, she's taking off the ring and forgetting about you 'til you sew your wild oats, then come on back and all is okay(?) If you'd buy that, I have a bridge in County Cork to sell you.

Hooks are King in the new one from Ireland's **Megan O'Hara**. Even its catchy twist title **Nothing Right & Nothing Left** goes toward hooking the listening fish. Dancers will doubtlessly be happily caught by it. Despite its European origin, the sound of this one could have come directly from the Oklahoma airwaves, sans fiddle, but swingin'!

I knew if we waited long enough, some REAL Western Swing (containing the right stuff) would turn up! **Edward Williams** might be the **Man In The Shadows**, but he brought the twin fiddle and steel guitar sound with him. It features the classic two-note fiddle 'ignition' that's integral to its pedigree! It's the sound Bob Wills could endorse.

Although the staging of a **Rodeo** doesn't commonly happen in Ireland, it's a Friday night and one has come to town in the new **Aiden Tierney** tribute song. "Tonight's the night and we're finally in the radeo," he sings. This is O'rodeo but the CBR and PBR are both mentioned by name, so it's safe to say the stock should guarantee it's still 'big bucks!'

Whiskey-voiced Irish lad **Mike Healy** delivers the goods as someone else delivers the jug in **Uncork The Whiskey**. From the promotional description, apparently we'll need to designate a brand new category of "Ragtime Swing" for this one. Where will it end?? As long as people want to swing, they'll find something to swing to. Law of nature.

The opening lyric is the classic Western phrase "Cowboys never cry," so there's no doubt what Canadian singer **Ron A. McNeill** had in mind in his co-write **Calling All You Heroes**. He decries the current state of human discord with a full-frontal attack. It's a bit profane so the current FCC may block its on-air use. That's a damn shame.

Speaking of "no doubt what they have in mind," try this. A Country Rocker with singer **Chantell Alexi** from Australlia pictured in the promotional art with a film strip, a bunch of cowboys riding the range and she's asking for a return of "Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson and John Wayne" types. The song is called **Testosterone**. Uh....got it!!!

From the dance floor to her front door, Ireland's **Lauren McCrory** flat-out says **You're Coming Home With Me**. The up-tempo Country Swing song leaves no mystery about her intentions with a vivid list of her reasons for them! The promo material describes it as having "a cheeky twist." Sounds like this couple will be twisting theirs alright!





*Clint Bradley - Live in Finland*

The international membership of IWMA continues to grow. We welcome **John Tilley**, professional poet and storyteller from Saskatchewan, Canada. From Australia, new member multi-award-winning **Shaza Leigh** from Tamworth, New South Wales, wears many hats as singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, performer, producer, and broadcaster. She has been named 2026 Global Songwriter of the Year. Also from Tamworth, we welcome multi-award-winning **Peggy Gilchrist** who is known as "Australia's Queen of the Country Piano." Both Shaza and Peggy are part of the Butler Band and will perform at this year's IWMA convention. Also watch for their worldwide tour that includes cities in the U.S. A music video of **The Butler Band**, featuring **Birdie Nichols** from the U.S., can be viewed on **KC LaCourse's** biweekly Hearts of the West video showcase on social media.

Western music is performed worldwide by IWMA members. From the north, **Doc Mehl** brought his "west-clectic" music and **Doris Daley** her Western poetry to a sell-out crowd in their hometown of Diamond Valley, Alberta. They will be performing in September at the Caroline Cowboy Music and Poetry Gathering in Alberta, Canada.

**Greg Hager** returned from his 6th concert tour in Japan performing 25 shows in multiple locations, including schools of English and Daito Bunka University as well as several programs in conjunction with local missionaries. Greg has learned that the Japanese people love the American Cowboy, and his songs resonate deeply despite the language barrier.

**Clint Bradley** from the U.K. is finalizing another tour of Finland with his band and has confirmed dates to perform in Switzerland. The Clint Bradley Band will play in the grounds

of Powis Castle in Wales in July at the Welshpool Country Music festival, as well as hitting the road for more U.K. shows. As a side note, Clint's Western song, "Liberty Wind," has been getting play time on BBC 6.

This Spring **John and Joanne Lowell** were on an over two-week music tour in Ireland. In October, John will be on a two-week tour of Germany, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, and Austria with his international trio consisting of a German bass player, an Italian mandolin player, and John on guitar.

**Hilary Gardner** and the Lonesome Pines will perform in the U.K. in July. It will be their second time performing at Crazy Coqs in London and a debut performance at the Stables in Milton Keynes, U.K.

**John Smyths (Johan Smits)** from Germany received a Bronze Medal at the European International Music Awards for his song "Last Night." The song has been receiving positive reviews worldwide and hit #81 in the Cashbox Chart in the U.S. John was in the Top 10 for the World

Songwriting Awards. Recently, John had a two-hour interview with Kurt Pinger of Country Radio Revolution—a well-known fixture in the Country music scene in Germany and Austria.

In other news, the Western Yodel is international! **Devon Dawson's** yodel is heard in the Chinese language version of "Jessie, The Yodeling Cowgirl" at the Toy Story 2 section of Disneyland in Shanghai, China. Joey Miskulin produced the track, using translated lyrics and a Chinese vocalist, but retaining the use of Devon's yodel, since yodel is an international language!

Australia has embraced several IWMA members who are charting strongly with Star Central and played by **Mark Eckel** on Oz Country Music Radio and around the world. **Carlos**



*Doris Daley and Doc Mehl*



*Shaza and Peg*

Washington's "I'm Coming Home" was on the Top 10 Inspirational Chart for 56 weeks, and **Kevin Tuckfield's** "Why He Rides" was #1 on the Country Chart. On the Alternate Chart, **Ron Christopher's** "Borderline Career" was #1 and **Carol Markstrom's** "Juniper and Sage" was #1 and crossed over to land on the Country Chart as well. **Patty Clayton's** song "So Many Cowboys!" reached #2 on the Country Chart and, her latest release, "Wolf Moon" was #4 on the Alternate Music Chart. Songs from Ron, Patty, and Carol were in the top 10 with Allied International Radio's Oz Hot Trax Top 30 Radio Hits.

IWMA members from Australia are also strongly charting. "Cowgirls Heart" from **Shaza Leigh** was #1 on the Australian Country Chart, the Australian Traditional Country Chart, and Oz Hot Trax Top 30 Radio Hits. Likewise, **Peggy Gilchrist** reached #1 with "Waltz With Me My Love" on the Australian Traditional Country Chart and the Australian Instrumental Chart.

Over the past few months, several IWMA members have been interviewed by **Mark Eckel** of Oz Country Music Radio in Australia, including **Patty Clayton**, **Kevin Tuckfield**, and **Carol Markstrom**. **Dawn Anita Plumlee**, a beloved singer-songwriter and performer who we lost in 2021, can be heard daily on Oz Country Music Radio through the sponsorship of **KC LaCourse**.

**Mark Lynn Young** from Nashville has two songs on the European Academy of Country Music (EACM) Chart: "Ride it Out," which is climbing, and "The Long Way," which reached #1.

Western radio programs originating in the U.S. have expanded overseas. **Kevin Tuckfield's** Cowboy Radio Ride is now replayed on Mondays on Oz Country Music Radio in Australia. Western Air Waves from DJ **Aspen Black** has joined the broadcast schedule on Allied International Radio in Australia, part of the Australian Country Music Network of stations. The show also broadcasts weekly on Party Central Radio, based in the Netherlands, and Hall of Music Radio, based in Germany.

International recognition of Western music also occurs through the promotional services of **Geert Hakze** in the Netherlands, including recent releases from **Randy Palmer** for his single "Cowboy" and **Carol Markstrom** for "Juniper and Sage." One final note, watch for the names of your favorite IWMA artists on the weekly **Joyce Ramgatie** International Country Music Charts from the Netherlands for Top 200 artists and Top 40 songs. 🐾



*Hager*



"American folk music washes gently against Americana" is how multi-award-winning singer-songwriter Carol Markstrom's style of Western music is described by Country Music People Magazine. Audiences from across the U.S. to Alaska and also in Europe have been entertained by Carol's clear, emotion-filled vocals and songs that transport across places, times, and people, including Indigenous cultures. Her songs have been included in films and are played by DJs worldwide. Carol serves as a Director on the IWMA Board.

# WESTERN EVENTS CALENDAR

FOR DETAILS GO TO  
[IWESTERNMUSIC.ORG/EVENTS](http://IWESTERNMUSIC.ORG/EVENTS)

**Jul 25** National Day of  
the Cowboy

**Aug 6-8** Arizona Cowboy  
Poets Gathering  
Prescott, AZ

**Aug 6-9** Montana Cowboy  
Poetry Gathering  
& Western Music  
Rendezvous  
Lewistown, MT

**Aug 8** World Yodel Day

**Aug 14-15** American Chuck  
Wagon Association  
Granbury, TX

**SEP 25-26** Winnsboro Cowboy  
Music & Poetry  
Gathering  
Winnsboro, TX

**Sep 30-Oct 4** Durango Cowboy  
Gathering  
Durango, CO

**Oct 29-Nov 1** Death Valley 49ers  
Death Valley, CA

**Nov 6-7** Western Slope  
Cowboy Gathering  
Grand Junction, CO

**Nov 11-15** IWMA 2026 Convention  
Albuquerque, NM



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Professional Members receive *The Western Way*, have a listing on the IWMA website, and have one vote.

- ☐ Individual Professional Membership.....\$100
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(thru high school graduation)
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(high school graduation thru 21)
- ☐ Patron Membership.....\$125  
Includes sponsorship of the Patron Stage at Convention
- ☐ Business/Gathering Membership.....\$200
- ☐ Individual Life Membership.....\$1,500

#### SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP

Supporting Members (fans and others) receive *The Western Way* and have one vote.

- ☐ Individual Supporting Membership.....\$70
- ☐ Individual Youth Membership.....\$15  
(thru high school graduation)
- ☐ Individual Youth Membership.....\$25  
(high school graduation thru 21)
- ☐ Family Membership (one vote per family).....\$85
- ☐ Patron Membership.....\$125  
Includes sponsorship of the Patron Stage at Convention
- ☐ Individual Life Membership.....\$1,500

#### CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP

In addition to your National Membership, you may also want to support local chapters by adding individual Chapter Memberships.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth      |                                               |

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It's OK to include my information in the IWMA Membership Directory (printed annually and distributed during the IWMA Annual Meeting).

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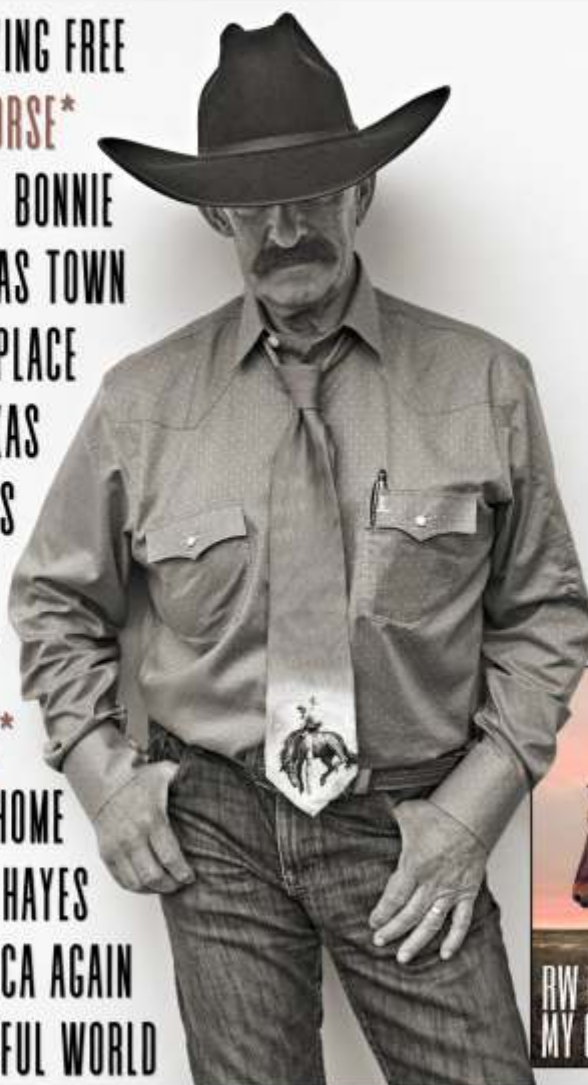
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