

HSGA QUARTERLY

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A very recent photograph of Uncle Ronald Kanahale taken with his lifelong companion “Suzie,” a vintage Rickenbacker 6-string steel guitar. The music they made together!

Farewell and Aloha, Uncle Ronald

Just a few weeks ago we got the sad news from Lanet Abrigo of the Abrigo ‘Ohana that Uncle Ronald Kanahale, who has been mentioned many times in the *Quarterly* over the last few years, is no longer with us. He was recently diagnosed with a serious cancer and had moved into the Abrigo home for care, but people never expected his time would be so short. He was far too young at age 59.

“Uncle” Ronald Kanahale was a master Hawaiian steel guitar player. His life and love was playing the “real old style” traditional Hawaiian music. Uncle Ronald came from the legendary Rogers Family of steel guitar players who passed their style down from family member to family member, includ-

ing special tunings, harmonic techniques, and other newly learned skills—none of it written down.

Uncle Ronald’s first steel guitar teacher was his uncle Benny Rogers. At Benny’s passing, he studied under his cousin David “Feet” Kekino Rogers. Following the death of Feet, he studied under his Uncle George “Pops” Rogers, who he cherished and had great admiration for. In the song “Moana Chimes” you can hear each family member’s unique style as different parts of the song are played.

Uncle Ron lived for his music, calling steel guitar “the breath of my life.” He shared his *mana‘o* [knowledge] with anyone who expressed an interest.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association is a tax-exempt, nonprofit educational corporation in the State of Hawai'i under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Our primary purpose is to develop a global network of players and lovers of traditional Hawaiian music and to encourage the study, teaching, and performance of the Hawaiian steel guitar. Our primary financial goal is to provide scholarship assistance through donations to steel guitar students who demonstrate the ability and intent to become accomplished performers.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to all steel guitar players and non-players around the world who support the perpetuation of the Hawaiian steel guitar. Annual dues are US\$30. The membership year begins July 1. Members receive the *HSGA Quarterly* and other group benefits. The *Quarterly* is mailed four times a year First Class to addresses in the United States and by Air Mail to foreign addresses. Members can obtain an Associate Membership for a spouse or family member at a cost of \$10, added to the annual dues; an Associate Member is entitled to discounts at certain HSGA functions and can vote in HSGA Board elections.

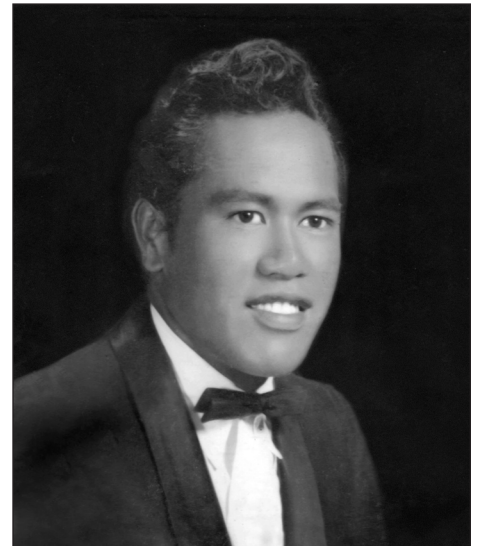
SUBMIT LETTERS & EDITORIALS TO:

HSGA Quarterly, 2434 Waioma'o Rd, Honolulu, HI 96816-3424 USA. Our e-mail address is hsga@hsga.org. Articles and photos should also be e-mailed directly to the newsletter editor at johnely@hawaiiansteel.com.

UNCLE RONALD Cont. from Page 1

Uncle Ronald taught many students throughout his lifetime including his nephews Keli'i and Kona Lau, Ron Johnson, "Hurricane East" Julie Lum, and "Hurricane West" Jade Louie, "Uncle Bruddah" Lionel Kahilihiwa, and Eddie Kaiama. If you had the interest, he was there for you. The price of lessons was always a Coca-Cola and a pack of smokes.

HSGA member Kay Das had this to say of Uncle Ronald: "I first met him maybe five years ago in the backyard of a house of a common friend. She had told me about him and I had expressed a wish to meet him. He biked part of the way from Wahiawa, took a bus, and biked the rest of the way to Kapahulu. All this for someone he had never met before. He showed me how he played "Moana Chimes." I was struck by his humility and his eagerness. Years later we got to be in more regular contact. He would call me at unexpected times, always a pleasant surprise. During one of our last calls, he said to me, 'Always play steel guitar



Uncle Ronald Kanahele's graduation photo, Aiea High School class of 1970.

with your heart.' Those few words immortalized for me the man, his music and his magic."

Denny Turner, a steel guitarist from North Shore O'ahu, reflected, "The last I saw him was about six weeks ago at a small impromptu *kanikapila* at the Ala Moana Center. He looked and sounded great, strong and his usual chipper self. I had drifted off into lah-lah land, lis-

A steel guitar "enclave" at Kualoa Ranch on the windward side of O'ahu. (l. to r.) Greg Sardinha, Timi Abrigo, Uncle Ronald, Ron Johnson, Eddie Kaiama, and Kamaka Tom.



tening to the music, eyes closed, leaning against a light pole back in the shadows. Anyone who knows Uncle Ron as a friend can't help but love him dearly. He is a real Hawaiian treasure in more ways than I can count or even know."

This from member Andy Barlo: "Last year in Winchester Uncle Ron truly lit up our convention with his warm and friendly personality. Ron Simpson was playing rhythm guitar backup for him one day, and Uncle Ron asked to borrow his guitar. We were amazed when he handed him the guitar and Uncle Ron started playing. Ron is right handed and Uncle Ron is left-handed! After the convention was over there was certainly a buzz left in the air. I never heard our members rave so much about Uncle Ron as our guest artist. He was truly something different and refreshing. I will cherish the time I spent with him for a long time to come."

Many others have paid tribute to this great but simple man who loved life and music and lived it to the fullest. Tributes continue to come from all parts of the world. May his spirit of aloha and his steel guitar magic live forever.

The following are excerpts from the eulogy delivered by Lanet Abrigo at Uncle Ronald's funeral service:

"Ronald Kauhi Kanahale was born to Samuel and Maile Kanahale on July 13, 1951 in Kamalo, Moloka'i. The fifth child of seven, and the fourth of five sons, Ronald attended Kapalama Elementary School, Pauoa Elementary School, then on to Alvah A. Scott Elementary School. From there he went on to Aiea Intermediate and graduated from Aiea High School, class of 1970. He was supposed to graduate in 1969, but his teachers loved him *so much*, they decided to keep him for one more year, which allowed him walk the line with his brother Gary.

"Ronald was a guy who loved music. Every time there was a party, you would find him sitting in the front of the stage watching Uncles Benny and Georgie, and cousin Feet playing the steel guitar. He admired them so much that he took it upon himself to experiment with steel at home. His first attempts were *not* welcome, as his mother discovered he had used a butter knife as a slide on her 'ukulele, cutting up her strings. She promptly went out and purchased an acoustic guitar and handed it to Ronald along with an AA battery. With these simple tools he began his journey. A few years later he finally approached his Uncle Benny and asked for formal lessons. The big problem was that Ronald was a "lefty" but that didn't stop him. He took his new National steel guitar home and rewired it for left-hand play. Later he traded his National in for his beloved "Suzie," a 1930s Rickenbacker steel. She would be his musical partner for the rest of his life.

"Still in his teens, Ronald joined his first band, the Sons of Liliha. Later he joined Mahealani, followed by Jus' Cuzins, a band he would play with for more than thirty years. With his endless love for playing the steel guitar, he



A recent photo of Uncle Ronald, decked out in his finest palaka shirt and white cap, performing with his prized "Suzie."

joined many more bands and musicians such as Na Molepo, Raiatea Helm, Local Sounds of Waianae, Kapahulu Sons, Anuhea, Naomilani and Company, Kaliko Kalima, Billy Gonzalves, Ho'opono, Allen Paiwa and David Jones. The last band he joined was the Abrigo 'Ohana, with whom he played through his last days. It was with this group that he forged a special relationship with a young boy, who would share his passion for the steel guitar. In Timi Abrigo, Ronald could see the Rogers legacy continue. This gave him incredible joy and peace.

"Ronald and Suzie enjoyed traveling to far-off lands to share their music. They made a long trip to record a CD in Japan. On another trip they went to Las Vegas. The last big trip took them across the continental United States all the way to Indiana, where he was the featured guest artist for the Aloha International Steel Guitar Club last year. The town was so touched by Ronald's music and contagious aloha spirit that they gave him the key to the city.

"Ronald will always be remembered for his kind, gentle, and *kolohe* (offbeat, crazy) approach towards others. His warm spirit shined through everything he did and lit a spark of aloha in the hearts of everyone." ■

Going to Joliet?

Please fill out and send in the convention forms included with your Quarterly. The Joliet Guest Artist this year is Greg Sardinha! You may pay the convention fee on arrival, but please, let us know ahead of time that you plan to attend. Players, time slots for stage performances go quickly. Let us know your preferences on the convention form and get it to us ASAP to guarantee your time slot!

Joliet 2011 Convention Preview

From Joliet Chairman Don Weber

This article comes on the heels of the 2011 Honolulu Convention, but it's already time to start thinking of this year's Joliet convention. The convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Joliet Hotel Conference and Convention Center on October 6, 7, and 8, 2011. Forms are included in this issue for both your convention and hotel registration. Do not delay—register early!

Everyone will be excited to know that our Honored Guest this year is Greg Sardinha. He recently received his latest recognition, a 2011 Hawai'i Music Award for Steel Guitar Album of the Year, which he shared with Alan Akaka and Casey Olsen. Most of you know that Greg was one of Jerry Byrd's early star students who went on to become one of the most visible steel guitarist in Hawai'i. He records a host of artists under his Keala Records label and operates Sma'Kine studio, one of the busiest recording studios on the island of O'ahu.

We want to thank Doug, Floyd, Fred, and Paul, who generously provided our sound at various times over the years. We fully appreciate all they have done for us. You will be seeing a new face at the sound board this year. Dave Chapman has been working as a sound engineer for over 20 years. He is well known at festivals, coffeehouses, dance halls, and concert venues around Michigan. He is currently the sound director for the Ten Pound Fiddle Coffeehouse. Dave is also a great electronics buff. Our thanks to John Hatton for his help in finding Dave.

In the last issue, we informed you that this year's convention fees are increasing. After many years of operating at



Joliet Convention regular and dancer Greg Wong does double duty, sharing some steel guitar with the Joliet 2010 audience.

a loss and with additional new expenses, we had to make this difficult decision. The new convention fee is \$45 per person, and the walk-in daily fee is \$15 per person. Please take note of it when submitting your registration. Remember also that you do not have to pay in advance. You may pay on arrival in Joliet.

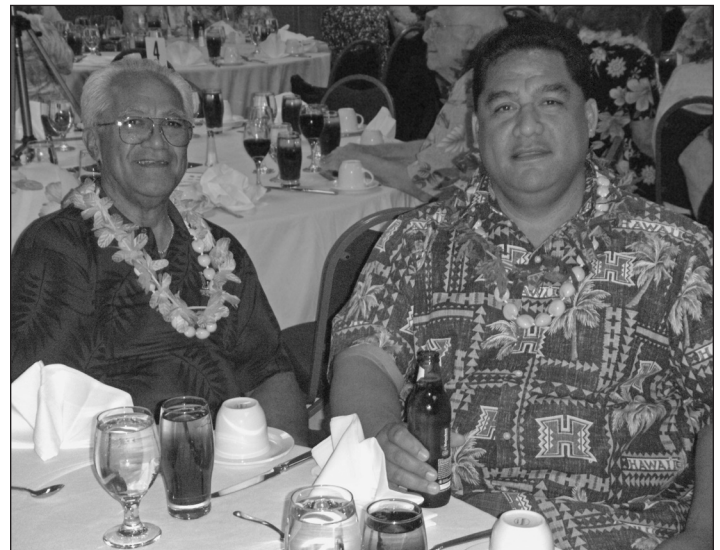
Make your reservations early. We urge you to call the hotel *directly* and tell them you are with HSGA to get the reduced room rate. The number is 815-729-2000. Also send your convention registration in to Wally Pfeifer as soon as you can, especially if you intend to perform. Wally needs that information to make up the playing schedule. If we don't hear from you, your name will not be on the list.

Mark your calendars and save the dates. All the convention details will be in the next issue. ■

Joliet Convention "newbie" John Lang from Shelby Twp, Michigan performing at Joliet 2010 with Chris Kennison on backup.



Taking a deserved break at the Saturday Night Lū'au, last year's Joliet Honored Guests, Hiram Olsen (left) and Casey Olsen.



Second Annual Waikīkī Beachwalk Steel Guitar Fest

From Alan Akaka

Aloha mai kakou, greetings everyone. The Second Annual Waikīkī Beachwalk Hawaiian Steel Guitar Festival is slated for Sunday, July 3, 2011. Featured will be Greg Sardinha, Casey Olsen, Jeff Au Hoy, Bobby Ingano, myself and special guest artists.

Last year Greg and the Kailua Bay Buddies kicked it off with a rousing rendition of “Hawaii 5-0” and the rest of his set was dedicated to surf and other Hawai‘i tunes that are not played often anymore.

Jeff Au Hoy and the Jeff Teves Trio stuck to the beautiful old standards that brought the audience back to the days of a few tall buildings and Hawaiian music around every block. Casey and the Hiram Olsen Trio followed with their signature vocals and instrumentals. Me and the Islanders did what we normally do—have fun entertaining the audience.

With the passing of our dear friend Ronald Kananehe, we will miss his presence along with that hallmark Rogers Family sound. Fortunately, Bobby Ingano will step in and will most certainly schmooze the audience with his sweet, smooth touch.

An addition to the festival program that I am working on with Senator Brickwood Galuteria and the sponsors, is to feature our new players on the steel guitar scene. More on that later in an upcoming issue.



Super Hawaiian jam at last year’s inaugural Waikīkī Beachwalk Festival with five unique styles of Hawaiian steel. (l. to r.) Jeff Au Hoy, Hiram and Casey Olsen, Greg Sardinha, the late Ronald Kananehe and emcee Alan Akaka play for an enthusiastic audience.

So if you are thinking about a summer trip to Hawai‘i plan for around the Fourth of July weekend and come to the Waikīkī Beachwalk for an entire afternoon and evening of Hawaiian steel guitar bliss. ■

It’s Dues Time Again!

Remember, HSGA’s membership year begins on July 1, 2011. Dues are \$30 and all issues go out ‘Air Mail’ (see the insert that was mailed along with this issue).

HSGA Donations

Thanks, HSGAers, for your donations this past quarter. **Don** and **Lynn Keene** came through yet again with a generous \$100 donation to our Scholarship Fund. We see many of the same names from year to year. Mahalo, all! Big mahalos to everyone who contributed. The following members donated at least \$10:

- Clifford and Barbara Adams, Huntington Station, NY
- Armand Bertacchi, Wheaton, IL
- Michael Cord, Cord International, Ventura, CA
- Frank Della-Penna and Stephanie Ortoleva, Washington, DC
- Hidehiko Furukawa, Ichihara-shi, Chiba Pref. Japan
- Kay Koster, Rockford, IL
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- Jess Montgomery, Kapa‘a, HI
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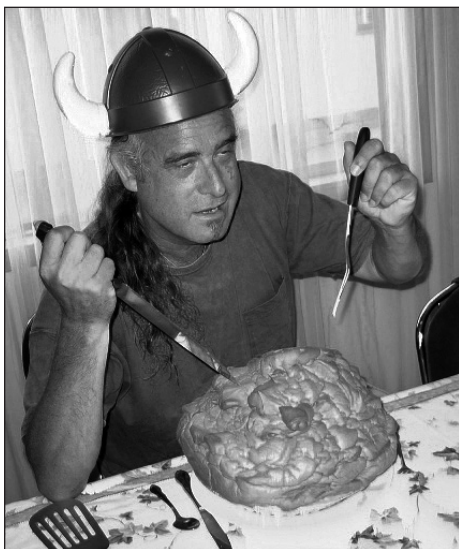
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COCO WIRE

This just in from the Fifteenth Annual Hawai'i Music Awards Winners and Nominees Banquet, which was held on April 11 at the Mānoa Ballroom in the Japanese Cultural Center. It was an evening of music, fun, laughter and cheers with a gathering of Hawai'i's top and upcoming artists and fans. Trophies were awarded to the best albums in all imaginable music genres found in Hawai'i, but the one that counted the most was the one dedicated to the Hawaiian steel guitar. **Alan Akaka, Casey Olsen** and **Greg Sardinha** proudly received the award for Steel Guitar Album of the Year, *Hawaiian Steel, Volume 6*. Singer-songwriter Keith Haugen stated that Alan, Casey and Greg are three of the most influential players in Hawai'i today. Another brethren of the steel guitar Ronald Kanahēle, who recently passed away, was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award. HSGA member Kay Das assisted in the presentation by introducing Ronald's work.

A propos, we just learned from **Sandy Sardinha** that both Alan Akaka's CD "Simply Steel" and "Hawaiian Steel, Vol. 6" have made it to the

From the archives, Ken Emerson attacks a lemon meringue pie while hosts Lorene and Art Ruymar contact the authorities.



(Left to right) Alan Akaka, Kay Das, Greg Sardinha, and Casey Olsen, celebrating Alan, Greg and Casey's win in the Steel Guitar Album of the Year category at the HMAs. Kay helped with the presentation of Uncle Ronald Kanahēle's Lifetime Achievement Award.

final nominations for this year's Nā Hōkū Hanohano Awards. Congrats, Byrd's nesters!

Members **Bobby Black** and **John Ely** performed at the 40th Reunion Concert for the Austin-based western swing band **Asleep at the Wheel** last November. Also on hand were founding steel player **Lucky Oceans**, **Cindy Cashdollar**, and the Wheel's current steel guitarist **Eddie Rivers**. All five steelers were featured and traded solos on "Oklahoma Stomp," that swingin' steel guitar instrumental the great Joaquin Murphey made famous. Willie Nelson closed the show, which was held at Austin's Long Center for the Performing Arts.

A related tidbit, **Jess Montgomery** shared the following: "Asleep at the Wheel played Kaua'i last week. I had never seen them live. Big fun. I drove them from the airport to the hotel, etc. so I got to hang a bit. I mostly talked with the bass player. Eddie was mostly out in the parking lot smoking. I talked with him a bit and really enjoyed the

sound check when he and the fiddler (on bass) jammed a bunch of old country tunes with Eddie singing." Jess is still doing lū'aus with Larry Rivera a few times a month. And lucky for us, he's always got his ears to the ground on the Garden Isle!

From U.K. member **Les Cook**: "I'm enjoying a short trip to Paris at the moment. Regarding news on current projects for Grass Skirt Records, here goes: This summer we have a limited edition CD out by the acoustic steel player from Spain, Daniel Arnau, entitled "Encantador de la guitarra hawaiana"—all 1920s and 1930s recordings to be released on our second label Stylo Magic. Later in 2011 we should have our next Grass Skirt vintage reissue disc out, including all 12 known sides by Jim and Bob (the Genial Hawaiians) plus all 12 recordings by George Ku with Charlie Opunui on steel. And as a new Grass Skirt venture for us, we are currently recording a new CD by Ken Emerson with Robert Armstrong. ■

JAPAN NEWS

From Japan Coordinator, Akitomo "Tom" Tohma

Thank you so much, members, for your kind and thoughtful emails to Setsuko and me following our terrible earthquake and tsunami disaster this past March.

The total death toll as of March 23 was around 11,000 with an estimated 16,000 missing. More than 15,000 of the missing are feared lost in the bottom of the sea. A total of 240,000 refugees are currently overwhelming resources and services in 2,000 makeshift asylums in 17 prefectures including Tokyo.

The Fukushima nuclear power plant—the source of the radiation leaks—is the largest in Japan with six reactors and provides 30 percent of the power for Tokyo's 13 million inhabitants. Tokyo is now on a power saving campaign with greatly reduced services throughout its transportation system. Initial reporting on the health hazards posed by the leak were greatly overstated by the local media, including reports of crop contamination in the northeast. Radiation experts have indicated that the level of radiation is minimal. The government announced "no harm," but only after farmers had already destroyed their crops, and now a massive restitution project is in place. No Tokyo residents have evacuated as previously reported—radiation level here is about a fourth of a typical hospital X-ray scan.

The Fukushima plant was built in 1970 on a high hill 10 meters above sea level with a 5.5-meter retaining wall designed to protect the plant from any tsunami predicted at that time. But the March 11 tsunami reached a height of 14 meters, and a 4-foot wall of seawater slammed into the plant cutting off all its power lines and severely damaging its vital water-cooling pumps.

There are 54 nuclear power plants in Japan and 2,000 experts from those plants are helping with the Fukushima reactor leak. A dozen policemen died while trying to rescue the elderly and trapped persons caught by the tsunami. A few firefighters went into the Fukushima reactor with water hoses to cool it down, knowing they would be severely damaged in the process. There were many heroes in this tragedy who helped others, while their own family and loved ones were lost.

Japan's northeast coast is a popular sightseeing spot with its many small islands and gulfs, but the largest of the tsunami waves tore into these gulfs, greatly increased in height, and then washed away virtually everything. Patients in the top floor of the four-story Takada Hospital were instantly snatched away by the wave leaving only a single survivor.

A Japanese defense force of over 100,000 have mobilized and helped save over 19,000 lives, provided nearly a million meals and thousands of tons of essential supplies to survivors



Tom Tohma's group *Nā Kama'aina* at the downtown Tokyo Hawaiian music club *Ho'okipa* last fall. (left to right) Yoshi Okano, Tom playing his *Excel* steel guitar, Kohei Makino, and Mike Abe.

during the two-week period following the tsunami. Restoration work continues to be a 24-hour operation with more than 1,800 damaged roads and bridges including areas that are completely cut off from any serviceable roads.

Help for survivors from all over the world has saved countless lives. Operation Tomodachi (tomodachi means 'friend' in Japanese) is the U.S. Armed Forces assistance operation, which has deployed the *USS Ronald Reagan*, the *USS Essex* and the *USS Tortuga*, and mobilized 19,000 navy soldiers and marines and 140 airplanes in the relief effort. Many lives have been saved and survivors in isolated areas continue to receive vital supplies via chopper and vessel. Survivors in cut-off island areas had been waiting for help for two weeks. A big HELP from friends!!

This from member Kiyoshi "Lion" Kobayashi: "Thank you for your anxious email to people of Japan, our family and me. I haven't heard any bad news about my relatives and steel guitar friends. Fortunately, we are all fine and well.

When I finished a 'ukulele lesson in Shinjuku (five bus stops from J.R. Meguro) in the basement of a high building, my student and I saw how things were going and decided to head home on foot. We live in the same area so we started to walk from Shinjuku at 8:30 PM. We arrived at Shibuya (three bus stops down) at 10:15 PM. My bus line was still working, but there were around 300 people waiting in line. I waited for a bus for two hours and traffic was ultra heavy, so I didn't arrive home until 1:50 AM. Earthquake after-shocks are still happening. ■

Please Contact Us!

Send news or comments to: HSGA Quarterly, 2434 Waiomao Rd, Honolulu, HI 96816-3424. Email us at hsga@hsga.org.

The Bill Sevesi Story

The following is a compilation of several stories and interviews with legendary Polynesian performer Bill Sevesi. Thanks to writers Matthew Manukia (Bill Sevesi's grandson), Sandra Kailahiand, and Graham Reid for their work covering Bill's lengthy career spanning some six decades.

Bill Sevesi is a legend of the New Zealand music scene and more specifically the Polynesian-Hawaiian steel guitar genre. Forming his first band in 1939, he has enjoyed a long career with more than 50 albums and over 200 singles to his credit, including his 1958 Pacific Islands hit "Bye Bye, Baby, Goodbye." He played a huge role in the early days of Auckland radio station Radio 531 PI and in the careers of many notable singers including Daphne Walker, Annie Crummer and the Yandall Sisters who recorded their very first album at Bill's garage studio behind his home in Mount Roskill in the Auckland area.

The Early Years

Bill Sevesi was born Wilfred Jeffs in 1923 in the city of Nuku'alofa on Tongatapu, one of Tonga's principal southern islands. He emigrated from Tonga to Auckland at age 9. It wasn't long before Sevesi would tune his crystal set to the then-popular Hawaiian guitar sounds of Sol Ho'opi'i and others flooding the airwaves from American radio networks. Says Bill, "I was living on a farm in Manukau where the town centre is now located and was listening to radio station IZM when I heard the steel guitar sound for the first time. I fell in love with it." Bill was 14 at the time and soon began learning how to play steel.

His first job was in a radio factory where he and his workmates built an amplifier and steel guitar for him. He learned rudimentary melodies and chords off the radio, and when he could afford it bought 78 rpm records for his wind-up gramophone. "I started to learn to read music but I was getting mechanical and doing what the music was saying, but Polynesian music doesn't go that way," explained Bill.

Sevesi credits the great Auckland bandleader Epi Shalfoon as a huge influence on his 60-year career playing and producing Pacific Island music with his bands, which were renowned for their constantly changing lineups. Says Sevesi, "I asked around who the best bandleader was and everyone said him. He was then playing at the Crystal Palace in Mt. Eden. Epi played saxophone and walked around the floor and was an entertainer, too." Sevesi watched the band week after week, and eventually Shalfoon asked him if he was a musician. He said he was learning and could really play only one song, "Isa Lei," and Shalfoon invited him up. That was the turning point. Says Sevesi, "I was so encouraged by that, and that's one of the reasons why today I try to encourage other people."



Bill Sevesi (right) and his Islanders taken in 1968 in Auckland, New Zealand. Trevor Edmondson is the other steel guitarist shown.

The Orange Ballroom Years

Bill Sevesi is widely remembered for his days playing at the Orange Ballroom in Auckland where he played from the late '50s to the early '80s. The band was called Wilfred Jeffs and His Islanders, but Bill quickly realized that his name didn't blend in with the Polynesian sound so he changed it. It took five name changes to finally get one that he liked—Bill Sevesi and His Islanders. It made all the difference.

Bill explains that for those who are unfamiliar with the period, it is hard to imagine the social climate. Says Bill, "People would get dressed up to go to the pictures, restaurants couldn't serve alcohol, pubs closed at 6 PM, and most people didn't have television, so people went to dances." In fact Bill Sevesi and his Islanders were so popular that he had to form two other bands to cope with the demand. One night they had over 1,700 people for a midnight dance with others dancing in the streets outside.

Sevesi says it was the change in liquor laws that killed the Orange Ballroom. There were late night fights, bottles smashed and the ballroom was blamed. Said Bill, "Inside we were playing this beautiful Hawaiian music, but I could see the way it was going, so we quit. In June 1973 I left, the band carried on, but I wasn't used to playing empty halls and we were down to 300 to 400 [people] a night."

Sevesi and his Islanders recorded under numerous pseudonyms. His first recording was with country singer Tex Morton in 1949 with the band credited as the Rough Riders. With Canadian-born hillbilly singer Luke Simmons they were the Blue Mountain Boys. For jazz singer Mavis Rivers, the band was called "the Astro Trio or some damn thing" according to Bill. On their hit "Bye Bye, Baby, Goodbye," he was called Will Jess, an abstraction of his birth name. The song was

number one for four weeks and had been recorded during a half-hour of studio downtime! He was also a recording star on the legendary New Zealand Viking Records label along with fellow Tongan Bill Wolfgramm.

Awards

Bill Sevesi has won numerous awards for his accomplishments including the Queen's Service Medal (1955) for his contribution to music in New Zealand, the Jerry Byrd Lifetime Achievement Award (1998) from the Steel Guitar Hall of Fame in St. Louis, Missouri, and a Lifetime Achievement Award (2006) at the New Zealand Pacific Music Awards. He was also named Creative New Zealand's Pacific Artist of the Year in 1997.

Recent Years

Bill Sevesi has never been one to rest on his laurels and has been active in recent years with a host of music and community education projects. Held last December was the Fourth Annual New Zealand 'Ukulele Festival, an event that stemmed from a vision Bill had over 45 years ago. Since its launch in 2007 the event has grown rapidly attracting over 15,000 visitors including 3,000 students from over 47 schools. The festival was set up to inspire New Zealanders of all ages to make music and to stage a festival that celebrates 'ukulele playing, composing, and performance.

When asked about the origins of the idea, Bill explained that he has always wanted to help people in life anyway he can, a sort of repayment of a debt he feels he owes for being rescued from drowning as a boy in Tonga. As for the vision he had, Bill was out for a walk one morning when he heard school children walking to school singing "Bye Bye, Baby, Goodbye." He realized that the song is so easy to play and sing that kids could do it. It was then that Bill made a commitment to one day teach school children simple songs that would encourage them to sing and dance. He decided that 'ukulele would be the easiest and cheapest instrument for kids to start off with.

With the support of key music teachers, organizers, and sponsors, Bill's vision soon led to the 'Ukuleles in Schools' program. Student participation took off immediately and soon the possibility of an Auckland-wide festival was on the horizon. The first year of the festival at Mount Roskill Grammar School was considered a great success and by the second year the festival had grown so much that organizers were forced to relocate the festival to Mount Smart stadium, home of Auckland's national rugby team. In 2007 around 1,300 students from 79 schools banded together to form New Zealand's largest 'ukulele orchestra known as the Kiwileles. The group has been featured on the festival's main stage ever since and has also performed on nationwide television twice.



Bill Sevesi's 2007 release "The Magic Steel Guitar of Bill Sevesi" available on iTunes and other websites (see page 20 for details).

Bill Sevesi's Dream

Bill's most recent project is a TV documentary outlining the story of the 'ukulele, which was aired this past January in New Zealand. The title *Bill Sevesi's Dream* comes from Sevesi's dream of school kids all over New Zealand one day playing ukes. The uke is everywhere—in New Zealand's schools, on stages in the concert halls and pubs and clubs, and even on the pop charts, thanks to the extremely popular Wellington International 'Ukulele Orchestra.

The documentary traces the history of the 'ukulele, how it found its way from Madeira to Hawai'i through the Pacific and out to the world. A key event in the popularization of both the 'ukulele and steel guitar, was the landmark Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, when Hawai'i hosted a hugely popular pavilion featuring plenty of 'ukulele and steel guitar music. As a result America fell for both instruments and the world followed.

The documentary ends with 87-year-old Sevesi and his 68-year-old one-time pupil Sione Aleki playing their ukes together one last time. Aleki, a virtuoso sometimes billed as the Jimi Hendrix of 'ukulele, died performing on stage in his native Tonga only a few weeks after the filming.

From Lorene Ruymar

And now, here's my story. It was some time around 1983 when Art and I went traveling "down there" and of course we set foot on New Zealand soil, arriving in Auckland late at night. Who should be there to pick us up by taxi but the great

Continued on Page 20

Hawaii Calls

(Harry Owens)

Arrangement by Alan Akaka

B11th Tuning

♩ = 90

Steel Gtr. (B11th)

strum and slide

strum

strum

B

let ring

strum

Listen to audio version, if available, at: www.hsga.org/quarterly.htm

23

A G7 G#7 A7 D G9 A G#7 A

7 9 8 7 5\4 3 2 4 5

slide

29

B7 Bm7 E7 A Eb7 E7 F7 C F7

3 5 6 8 3 5 6 8 4 5 6 3 5 6 8

35

Bb C7 F7 Bb B7 Bb7

strum

41

Eb F7 A7 Bb C7

strum

Hawaii Calls (cont.)

47

F7 Tacet D F7 B \flat C7

slide

T	6 7 8	8 6	4	8 6 13	8 6
A	6 7 8	8 6		8 6 13	8 6
B	6 7 8	8	3	8 6 13	8

strum

53

F7 B \flat B \flat 7 E \flat A \flat 7

T	4	8 6 5	4	6	6 6 5 6	8 6 6 8
A		8 6 5	4			
B	3	3 5 6 8	4			

59

B \flat A7 B \flat C7 C \flat 7 F7 B \flat A \flat 7 G7

slide

T	10	3 5 6	8	6	6 10 10	6	9	8	
A	9 8 6 5	4	7	6	6	5	9	8	
B		4					9	8	1 3 1

Tag

C7 C \flat 7 F7 F \flat 13(b9) Tacet B \flat maj7

ad lib

strum all

T		1	2	3	8 8 6 8	1	13	8
A	3			3	8 8 6 8	1	13	8
B		1			8 8 6 8	1	13	8

More On Tunings

From Bogue Sandberg

Hello from dah U.P.! [ED: Michigan's Upper Peninsula.] I enjoyed John Ely's article on tunings in the Spring 2010 issue and hope there will be others to follow. The proliferation of tunings will probably only get worse. As a retired engineering professor, I'm guilty as charged with the fascination of it all.

Coming out of a bluegrass-country dobro background, my instinctive tuning is obviously high-bass G (GBDGBD). When I first started flirting with the "dark side" of jazz, swing, and Hawaiian, I looked at the standard C6th tuning (CEGACE), but felt the thin upper strings might not sound too good on acoustic dobro with wider string slots at the bridge and nut. I tried a low A6th (AC#EF#AC#). I haul only one guitar to a gig or jam and missed the fifth on top and the familiarity of the G tuning, so I went to a high G6th (BDEGBD). If I were only allowed one 6-string, that would be it. New guitar fever resulted in a 7-string McKenna in G6th (GBDEGBD). A couple years later, I had Gregg build a 24-fret, 8-string, my main axe these days. When I got it, I used G6th (EGBDEGBD) for a couple of months then switched to G13 (FGBDEGBD)

and never looked back. I'm learning what you might call a drop-G6th—lowering the bottom D to C#. I suspect most dobro players moving into 7- or 8-string instruments will want to stay with G as their root.

I've been long winded here, but what I've found during this journey is that I tend to look for the similarities, rather than the differences in tunings. To me, C6th, high A6th, C13th, etc. are so close to my G13, it's really a matter of moving everything up or down the fretboard and finding alternatives for a few spots in a tune. In my limited experience to date with the drop-G6th, I'm finding that work-arounds for converting tabs written for B11th or D9th are not too bad, because the intervals on most of the strings have the same pattern.

So perhaps an article analyzing the similarities as well as the differences between common tunings would be of interest to other readers.

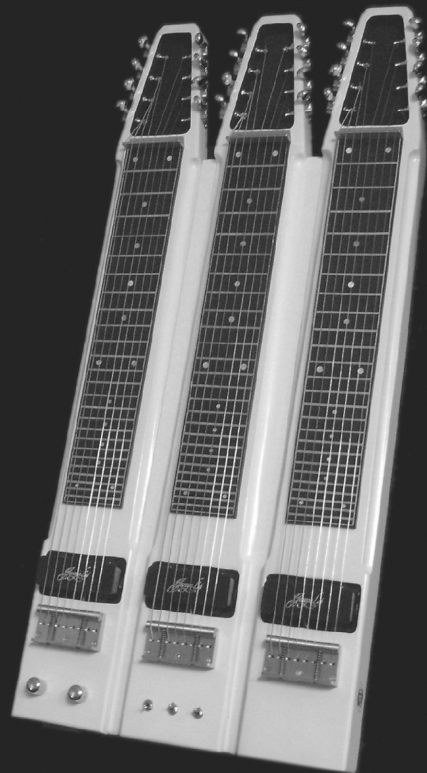
Thanks for keeping the thread alive, Bogue. Comment, anyone? Speaking of similarities among tunings, Bogue's tuning, the G13th, is a transposition of what I call the Junior Brown C13th (BbCEGACEG). Among all tunings you can strum, I firmly believe that this tuning (and Bogue's!) is the most versatile and chord-capable tuning there is. -John Ely ■



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David Samuel Kanui – Part One

By Anthony Lis

This two-part article examines the career of Hawaiian-born steel guitarist and vocalist David Samuel Kanui (1892-1965). Kanui lived a long and interesting life in which he co-authored a steel guitar method and toured the Midwest with his first wife before settling in New York City, where he worked at various theaters and—perhaps—Atlantic City’s Steel Pier. Kanui also backed country music pioneer Jimmie Rodgers on one side, which unfortunately was never released. With his second wife, Kanui performed for over twenty years in New York-area clubs and made four recordings for the Continental label.

With considerable assistance from Kanui’s daughter, Ewalani, I submit this overview of Kanui’s life.

David Kanui was born in Honolulu on December 15, 1892 to Alama and Anna Kanui. According to the 1910 United States Federal Census, Alama was born in China and Anna was born in Honolulu.

According to Ewalani Kanui, her father likely inherited his musical talent from his mother, who played Hawaiian slack key guitar and was, in Ewalani’s words, a beautiful melody singer. Kanui’s father was not involved in his upbringing and his mother died when he was around two-and-a-half years old, leaving young Kanui to be raised by his grandparents, who legally adopted him in the wake of his mother’s death.

Kanui attended the Queen Emma Hall kindergarten in central Honolulu. While in fourth grade at the Kaiulani School northwest of downtown, Kanui befriended future songwriter-band-leader-pianist Johnny Noble (1892-1944), who lived a half-block away. Ewalani remembers her father relating that, while still a young boy, he sold

newspapers and shined shoes to earn extra money so he could buy his lunches and school clothes for himself.

Kanui’s grandmother died sometime around the year 1901. Kanui’s grandfather eventually remarried and moved to the Waikīkī area of southeast Honolulu. Ewalani relates that while in Waikīkī, her father and his friends helped Duke Kahanamoku lift canoes off and on the beach. Duke was only around 11 years old at the time and would go on to become the father of modern surfing with gold medals in swimming at the 1912 and 1920 Olympics.

In a March 2011 e-mail to the author, Ewalani added, “Dad attended several schools because his grandfather went where the work was. My dad quit school when he was in sixth grade while attending Ka’ahumanu school, mainly because he had a job that paid good, and in those days kids were not required to finish school.”

In January 1909, seventeen-year-old Kanui met Utah egg magnate Soren Hanson and his family while they were vacationing in Honolulu. The Hansons invited David to come with them to Utah to help with their huge chicken egg storage facility in Hyrum, about 60 miles northeast of Salt Lake City, with the understanding that he could return to Hawai‘i in six months if he wished. According to Ewalani, David’s grandparents urged him to accept the offer so he could have a better future, noting that in those days most Hawaiians were poor. The 1910 census, enumerated in April of that year, lists nineteen-year-old Kanui’s occupation as doing “odd jobs” for the family.

When asked why, how, and when her father might have learned to play the steel guitar, Ewalani replied in an October 2008 e-mail that:

“My Dad ... taught himself to play the steel guitar and learn[ed] how to read and write music because he knew



A photo of David Kanui in his younger years, sent to us by his daughter Ewalani.

he’d have to do this in order for him to pursue music as a living. My Dad was one of those rare creatures who lived and breathed music as a way of life. He never said which state he was in nor how long he stayed there when he made this decision.”

Ewalani added that at some point, her father did take voice lessons, remarking upon her father’s “very clear and pleasant tenor voice.”

Kanui eventually made his way east from Utah. By 1916, Kanui had married hula dancer Siottha Jane Fuller (1892-1970), and was living with her in Denver, Colorado, where he taught steel guitar. According to the 1930 census, Fuller was born in Missouri to Missouri natives. Ewalani stated that her father met Jane while traveling through the state and that Jane was part Native-American with dark hair but very light blue eyes.

The *Ballanger and Richards Denver Directory 1916* shows Kanui and his wife living on Stout Street in the northeastern part of downtown. By this time the Kanuis must have amassed a reputation on the vaudeville circuit, for Denver musician and music teacher Theo DeHarport described David Kanui as “a very fine soloist [and] a

head liner [sic] in vaudeville” in his 1916 *Complete Method for Playing the Hawaiian Steel Guitar*, which Kanui co-authored. The cover of the method book includes photos of both Kanui and his wife holding a steel guitar.

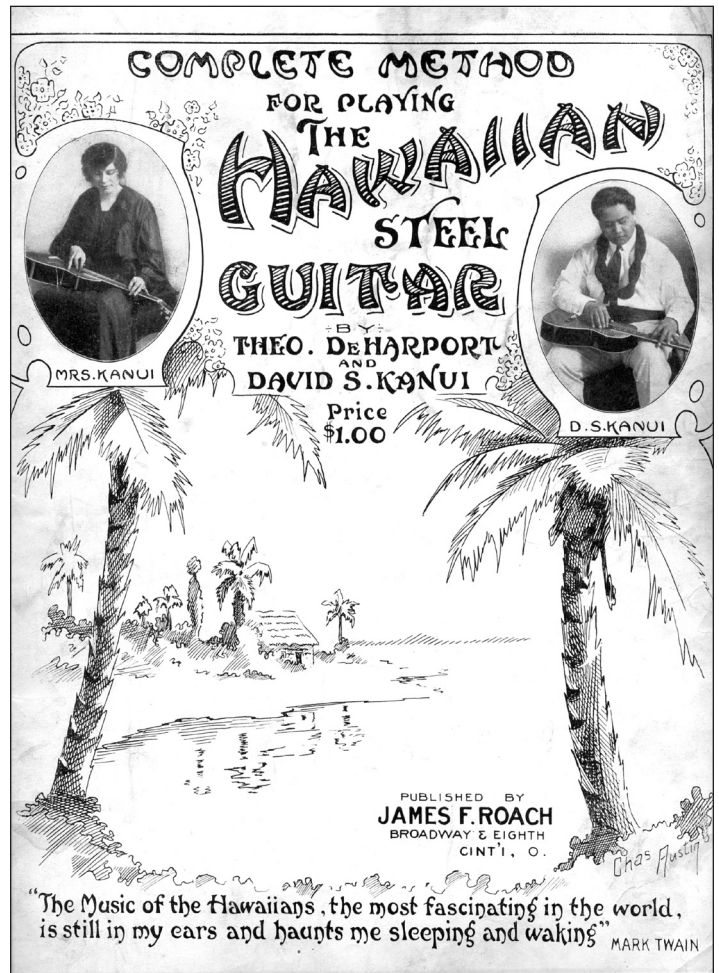
In early June 1917, David Kanui passed through Oklahoma City while touring with Richard Gustav Holldorff’s Royal Hawaiians troupe. Holldorff was a German showman and former patent medicine salesman born in 1877 who was residing in Kansas City, Missouri around the time of the tour.

A perusal of the Historical Newspapers Collection at the ancestry.com genealogical website shows Kanui and his wife playing gigs throughout Ohio and Eastern Wisconsin from October 1918 through October 1920. The February 26, 1919 *Hamilton Daily Republican-News* (in Hamilton, Ohio, just north of Cincinnati) noted the following: “Today and all this week [at the Grand Theater] is offered Kanui’s Hawaiian Players, a company of five from the far-away land of weird and enchanting music. This is unquestionably the best Hawaiian act that has ever been presented in Hamilton. In addition to the plaintive music is featured Princess Leota [Jane Kanui]—who presents her sensationally graceful Hula-Hula dance.”

The Newark, Ohio *Daily Advocate* proclaimed David Kanui the “master of the steel guitar,” while the Sheboygan, Wisconsin *Press* of October 5, 1920 described the Kanuis as “an Hawaiian duo who have an excellent repertoire that is away from the ordinary and above the average [which includes] some excellent singing [and] instrumental playing, as well as native dancing, all costumed correctly, making this a very interesting little act.”

Les Cook has noted that throughout the 1920s the Kanui-Fuller duo remained active on the vaudeville circuit on the East Coast. By 1930, Kanui and his wife were ensconced in New York City. The 1930 census shows Kanui and his wife

A promotional photo of one of David Kanui’s Hawaiian groups.



The charming cover of David Kanui’s steel guitar method book.

living in an apartment building on West 56th Street in Manhattan, just southwest of Central Park, with Kanui employed as a musician at an unnamed theater.

Regarding Hawaiian musicians playing in theaters, Ewalani Kanui’s sister Onolani relayed that by the later 1930s, there were five well-known theaters in New York City where Hawaiian performers such as her father frequently performed, including the Palace in Midtown Manhattan. According to Onolani, the theater shows were a combination of stage acts and movies, with the stage acts featured before and after the movie. (In later days, the movie portion was dropped.)

Ewalani’s sister, although just a small child at the time, recalls that their dad worked a lot with bandleader and guitarist Lani McIntire and that they would meet other Hawaiian entertainers for weekly poker get-togethers at Kanui’s apartment in New York City.

In August 1932, Kanui accompanied country music pioneer Jimmie Rodgers on steel guitar at a recording session held at Victor Records’ Camden, New Jersey headquarters.

Continued on Page 20

The 2011 Rick Alexander Non-Pedal Sessions Report

From Member Jeff Strouse

I'd like to thank everyone near and far who helped make the 2011 Rick Alexander Non-Pedal Sessions a success! It's an honor to be part of an event that brings together some of the finest folks around, who all have one thing in common, the love of the steel guitar.

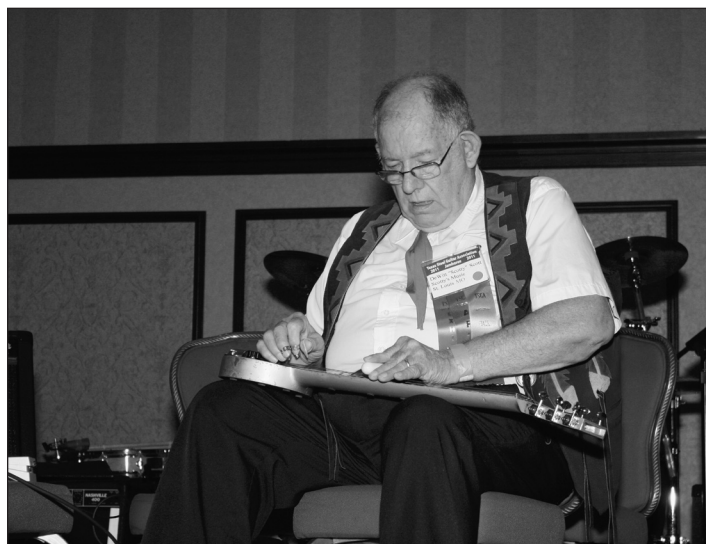
When I arrived on Wednesday, the first smiling face I saw was HSGA member K.J. "Tuck" Tucker. He picked me up from the airport and helped me run errands that day. Phyllis Tresnicky made some goodies for us to eat while we were on our feet and running with no time for real meal breaks. Brad Bechtel brought some Texas barbeque, too, but someone slipped a jalapeno into my BBQ-stuffed shrimp and my mouth is still on fire!

I was emceeing and handling some behind the scenes things, so I didn't get a chance to take notes but I'll list some highlights I recall.

Western swing standards like "Panhandle Rag," and "Milk Cow Blues" were well represented. Nothing gets your feet tapping like a good polka and Cindy Cashdollar played a great polka tune, "Canal Street Parade." Steel Guitar Hall of Famer Billy Robinson mesmerized us with his version of "I Love You So Much It Hurts." Billy is the slant and string pull "king." Watching him play is unbelievable at times. Billy started on the Grand Ole Opry in 1948 and played behind all the country music legends.

Eddie Ortego and Carroll Benoit played a nice bluegrass set with Eddie on resonator. Dan Tyack also played resonator with a hot blues rendition of Elmore James's "It Hurts

Chuck Lettes playing a nice variety of material on his frypan.



Steel kingpin Dewitt Scott, AKA "Scotty," treating the TSGA crowd to some sweet Jerry Byrd stylings on his Rickenbacker frypan.

Me, Too," and a swinging version of "Up a Lazy River." In a more jazzy vein, George Piburn played his ever-popular version of "Deep," Rose Sinclair played a dreamy "Harlem Nocturne," and Bob Hoffnar played Django's "Nuages."

Hawaiian music was well represented by HSGA regulars Wade Pence, Ivan Reddington, Sharon Denney, Dave Kolars, and Don Woods, doing songs like, "Aloha Nui Ku'u Ipo", "Harbor Lights", "Akaka Falls," "Drowsy Waters," and "Sand" with Sharon singing a delightful version of "That's the Hawaiian In Me." Some very sweet Jerry Byrd sounds were heard on Friday when Hall of Famer Dewitt Scott took the stage, and surprise guest Ray Montee took the stage on Saturday morning. Ray has played on three Hōkū award-winning CDs as well as being a recipient of the Jerry Byrd Lifetime Achievement Award.

Chuck Lettes entertained us with a variety of songs and unique arrangements, backed up flawlessly by Jim and Barbara Stalhut.

Steel and standard guitar virtuoso Mike Neer covered a variety of musical styles, including the '60s R&B hit "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," Speedy West's "Steelin' Moonlight," and country favorites like "Bud's Bounce." You'd swear he had invisible pedals! He closed his set with the beautiful "Yellow Roses" in tribute to our recently departed steel guitar brother Dave Giegerich.

A new feature this year was the live webcast provided by GeorgeBoards. George and P.J. Piburn stayed on their feet all day operating the equipment and moderating the webcast chatroom. I got to say hello to several steel guitar friends from abroad—Kevin Brown, Neil Cameron, Papa Yellow Steel, and Crowbear Schmitt. At one point there were over 50 people watching! But most special was that Rick Alexander's widow Cathe was able to tune in and enjoy the

show as well. She never got a chance to attend the conventions with Rick and me, as she had to hold down the home front while Rick was away. It was great to have her see what a special event Rick had created, and what an influence he had on the non-pedal steel guitar world.

The jams were great. Friday night ended early at around 11:30 PM, but most folks were tired from traveling. The Saturday night jam went until about 3:00 AM. The jams were nice and relaxed, no one trying to play over another. Just a circle of friends having fun, sharing solos, and making music. All instruments are welcome and players of all levels of proficiency are encouraged to participate.

As you know, we run on donations in order to keep from having to charge admission to the event, which is something Rick Alexander and I swore we would never do. A big thank you to all those who made donations to help sponsor this year's event: Mark Roeder, Kristy Larson, Ivan and Dee Reddington, Dave Kolars, Sonny Jenkins, Eric Stumpf, John Lang, Ben Rubright, Billy Gilbert, Cathe Alexander, Tribotone Bars, Bob Blair, John Allison, Gary Mortenzen, Jay Fagerlie, GeorgeBoards, and Neil Cameron.

We had several vendor tables this year covering a wide range of products. John Hatton had two tables full of goodies ranging from books, CDs, shirts, strings, bars, 'ukuleles, and much more. He also donated a 'ukulele for the raffle with the proceeds going to support the Non-Pedal Sessions. Mark Roeder had a table to display his custom-built lap steel stands. Ask anyone who has one—they are the best!

We missed our dear friend Herb Remington this year, but Mrs. "R" hurt her foot and couldn't get around, so Herb needed to stay at home. He was there in spirit though, as several folks played "Remington Ride," "Boot Heel Drag," "A Smooth One," and other popular "Herb" tunes.

Congratulations go out to Cindy Cashdollar, who is the most recent inductee into the Texas Steel Guitar Hall of



Newly inducted into the Texas Steel Guitar Hall of Fame, the ubiquitous Cindy Cashdollar playing her Remington Steelmaster.

Fame! We're very proud to have Cindy as an ambassador of the non-pedal steel. Her proud mother, Carol, flew in from New York to see her receive the award.

Finally, HSGA member Howard Reinlieb deserves a big round of applause for not only standing on his feet for two days videotaping and taking pictures (my old job), but also for handling the "computer side of things" with compiling and uploading videos and running the Rick Alexander Non-Pedal website.

The goal of the Rick Alexander Non-Pedal Sessions is first and foremost to preserve, promote, and encourage the non-pedal steel guitar in all types of music. It's a nonprofit venture and a labor of love. We're all just friends, celebrating the steel guitar in fun and fellowship.

From HSGA member Don Woods

In one sense, I was coming back home since I was born in Childress, Texas just 245 miles from Dallas. I was not sure what to expect because I was a Texan who would be playing a complete program of Hawaiian music.

I had to follow Hall of Famer 'Reece Anderson. His fans were out in number and he put on a terrific program. I felt like a pigmy among giants with Billy Robinson, Cindy Cashdollar and other notables playing.

I was a little short on sleep with a 95-mile commute from Ardmore, Oklahoma where I was staying with my sister. But my concentration was good during my set and there was no nervousness that I was aware of. How do you explain that?!

I did have Ivan Reddington and Mike Neer backing me along with a good bass player named Scott. They sounded real good. I played eight Hawaiian tunes in B11th, C6th, C13th, and C#m. Altogether it was a memorable trip to Texas, seeing old friends and making new ones. ■

HSGA member Don Woods "beating down the butterflies" during his Hawaiian set with Mike Neer (left) and Ivan Reddington.



VINTAGE AXES

By Paul Warnick

Hello again friends. This article is the fifth in our series on vintage steel guitars. I have been writing about various makes and models of Hawaiian steel guitars that have proved historically important during the evolution of the instrument. The focus of this issue will be the steel guitars of the maker originally known as the Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Manufacturing Company of Kalamazoo, Michigan. And, most notably their “flagship” model of electric steel guitar, the Console Grande.

Although the C. F. Martin Company of Nazareth, Pennsylvania is considered the premiere maker of American guitars, Gibson, which was established by 1894, is certainly the most prolific maker of all the various stringed and fretted plectro-phononic instrument families. While Martin is mostly highly regarded for its flat-top guitars and ukuleles, Gibson made all types of mandolins, banjos, ukuleles, flat-top and arched top guitars, as well as steel guitars from the earliest days before electrical amplification through their evolution to the year 1967 when production was discontinued.

Gibson’s first production model electric lap steel made its debut in 1935 and was called the “E.H.G.” model. Gibson followed Rickenbacker’s lead by also making its premiere model of cast aluminum. (National also debuted their metal-bodied electric Hawaiian in 1935.) Steel guitar legend Alvino Rey had been using the Rickenbacker Electro frypan when he first teamed up with Gibson, which was now beginning to experiment with electric instrument pickups. With his reputation of always being in search of better quality instruments, Alvino Rey would become closely associated with Gibson in the development of their pre-war electric

A great shot of the pre-war Gibson Console Grande owned by Kevin Mincke and professionally photographed by Rodger McBride Jr. Notice the engraved metal logo plate between the necks, the rosewood fingerboards and Charlie Christian pickups.



The late, great Don Helms playing his famous post-war Console Grande double-neck at a recent steel guitar convention.

steel guitars. The metal bodied E.H.G. model from 1935-36 is one of the rarest with a total estimated production of only 115 instruments. In all my years as a collector I can only recall encountering two of these!

By early 1936 the metal body gave way to Gibson’s more conventional maple wood-bodied construction with the introduction of the EH-150 and EH-100 lap steels. The EH-150 was featured in Gibson’s popular sunburst finish and had the Charlie Christian pickup. The lower-end EH-100 was available in sunburst or black and had a straight bar pickup with a cream colored bobbin. The very rare “Roy Smeck” model—essentially an EH-150 in a tuxedo black and white finish—debuted in late 1937. That same year the first EH-150 double necks were cataloged, usually in 7- and 8-string configurations. Gibson had actually made its first custom double necks in 1936 for Alvino Rey and some other well-known players of the day. Although lap models, they would evolve into the Console Grande models.

Introduced in mid-1938, the very first Console Grandes cost the same as the EH-150 double-neck and had identical electronics. Any combination of 6,7, or 8 strings was available. The earliest ones did not have legs and although they were advertised to be “held on the lap very easily,” it was not really true. A hard maple stand featuring a rack with adjustable height was soon offered as an accessory. The stand was rather short-lived and by late 1938 “a detachable concert stand” was available, which was really just three removable metal legs. Prewar models featured Charlie Christian pickups and could be had with Abrams string mutes. The estimated pre-war shipping total of Console Grandes is 141 with as few as only 10 in natural maple (non-sunburst) finish. Natural finish models comprised only six percent of the total pre-war and post-war production.

With the resumption of production after the World War II ban, the Console Grande became again available by 1948, but with some changes. Gone were the rosewood fingerboards, replaced by clear Lucite plastic ones with silver painted backs, and red and black dot markers. The single volume and tone controls were replaced by a metal control plate, which housed a volume control, two tone controls, a neck selector, and an optional “cut out” button. Perhaps the most important change was the pickup. Now an oval shape bobbin with exposed individual pole piece magnets, this would become the classic Console Grande most coveted by players.

Two of the greatest steel guitarists in country and western music would make their mark playing this post-war model. “Little” Roy Wiggins (Ivan Leroy Wiggins) was the featured steel guitarist with popular crooner Eddie Arnold and his Tennessee Plowboys. Wiggins popularized what would be known as the “ting-a-ling” sound—basically a two-string tremolo in the high register—and it became his signature lick. One of the few country steel players actually born in Nashville, Tennessee, he played almost every weekend on the famed “Grand ‘Ole Opry” with George “the Candy Kid” Morgan and others. He also owned a music store on lower Broadway in downtown Nashville.

Don Helms was the featured steel player with Hank Williams’s legendary Drifting Cowboys. He played on most all of Hank’s recordings except some of the early sides Jerry Byrd played on. According to Helms, he was playing a Fender Dual-8 at a show in Baltimore when he was approached by another steel player who offered to swap a new Gibson Console Grande for his Fender. Don never once regretted making the trade; his signature sound on that Gibson with Hank would become legendary the world over. In fact the oval-shaped pickup on Console Grandes of that period would later be referred to by us collectors as the “Helms” pickup.

The Console Grande became available as a triple-neck around 1951. About this time they switched from the oval “Helms” pickup to the P-90 “soap bar” type, which was starting to be used on Gibson’s electric Spanish guitars. The triple-neck is quite heavy but is supported by four adjustable legs, which replaced the earlier non-adjustable ones. Only 115 triple-necks were shipped before they changed to a different body shape and style in 1956.

With Gibson’s steel guitar sales lagging behind Fender’s by 1955, Gibson President Ted McCarty began to engineer a new console model to compete with the popular Fender Stringmaster. This model would have an entirely new design in terms of electronics, construction, and appointments. A squarish body of faux limed or natural oak replaced the maple. Triple coil pickups with a 4-8-4 pole piece arrangement replaced the P-90s. A four-position tone selector switch and two push buttons (one “do-wah” and the other,



John Ely’s Console Grande, model CG-520, featuring a 4-way tone selector, the “4-8-4” pickups, tandem tuners, tone and volume cancel buttons for that Speedy West “do-wah” sound, and ultra-wide string spacing at the nut. This was the last of the Console Grande designs.

an audio “cut-out”) were standard. These later models never really took off in sales; less than 400 double and triple-necks were shipped between 1956 and 1966.

I could go on at length about all the other wonderful steel guitars that Gibson made before the war like the EH-185 and EH-275 models. Also the cool art deco post-war models: the Centurys, Ultratones, Skylarks, and Royaltones. Instead I’d suggest that anyone who loves Gibsons like I do, pick up a copy of the recently published book “Gibson Electric Steel Guitars, 1935-1967” by A.R Duchossoir, copyright 2009 by Hal Leonard Books. It is a hardcover with 160 pages packed full of *everything* you ever wanted to know about Gibson steel guitars!

Next time I will be writing about a steel guitar that I know many of you enjoy. The Fender Stringmaster! ■

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ERICH SYLVESTER, 811 Quarry Rd, Apt B, San Francisco, CA 94129-2264

OVERSEAS

REIKO WATANABE, Citytower Yotsuya 806 Funamachi 1 Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo,
160-0006 Japan

YUZO TANIKAWA, Nishinogawa 2-30-7, Komae-shi, 201-0001 Japan

BILL SEVESI Continued from Page 9 DAVID KANUI Continued from Page 15

Bill Sevesi himself. He drove us to his home where his wife cooked a feast of a dinner for us (at midnight!!). They invited other steel players to come over and entertain us, and awoke a lovely young lady from her sleep in her parents' home next door. She was asked to get into her hula dance costume and trot over to the Sevesi home to complete the concert and feast by dancing the hula for us. I'll bet she has never forgotten that and neither have we, the Canadians so far from home being so royally entertained by a 9-year old cutie at 1:00 AM on a school night!

Yes, you'd think we were royalty, the way Bill and his wife hosted us. We'll never forget!

For information on ordering Bill Sevesi's music please contact his distributor at morrie@rajon.co.nz. The following CDs are currently available: "The Magic Steel Guitar of Bill Sevesi," "Hula Lady," "Our Serenade," "I'm Maori," "South Seas Cruise" (boxed set of three CDs), "Pacific Caravan," "Bamboo Island," "Thank You For Making My Day," "The Very Best of Daphne Walker." ■

Changed Email?

Please send email changes to both our office (hsga@hsga.org) AND to John Ely (johnely@hawaiiansteel.com).

aiian musicians seemed to have ... the luck of the draw, I guess. Although he made postwar recordings for Continental [in 1946] it appears that he didn't play steel on them. According to Malcolm Rockwell's [Hawaiian record] discography, he sang on those records but didn't play any instrument."

According to Ewalani Kanui, her father worked in several bands in the early to mid-1930s (without his wife Jane), which toured extensively all over the East Coast. A photo of Ewalani's taken around 1932 shows her father posing at the Hialeah Park racetrack in Hialeah, Florida (just northwest of Miami) with three other musicians, including Honolulu-born guitarist John Leal, who later performed with Hal Aloma at the Hotel Lexington's Hawaiian Room in New York City as well as Honolulu's "Hawaii Calls" radio program.

Ewalani believes her father also likely performed in Atlantic City, New Jersey, having found pictures of the city's famous Steel Pier among her father's memorabilia. Ewalani added that the pier at one time had a complete Hawaiian village on it and that Hawaiian high divers, some of whom her father befriended, were featured diving off a tall rigging on the pier. Her sister Onolani believes their father used to occasionally dive off the pier himself.

To be continued in the Summer 2011 issue. Thanks to Ewalani Kanui for the photographs of her father. Thanks also to Hawaiian music scholar, record producer, and HSGA member Les Cook for his scan of the cover of Kanui and DeHarport's steel guitar method book. Information on Richard Gustav Hollendorff's Royal Hawaiians troupe was taken from Les's article "The Kanui Mystery Resolved" in the March 2008 issue of Aloha Dream magazine, put out by member Basil Henriques (check out sample pages of the magazine at www.waikiki-islanders.com). ■