

HSGA QUARTERLY

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A super shot of Alan Akaka, this year's Joliet Honored Guest, shown here at the Second Annual Waikiki Beach Walk Hawaiian Steel Guitar Ho'olaule'a held on July 3, 2011.

'Joliet Hawaiian Music Festival' News

From Joliet Chairman, Don Weber

As we mentioned in the last issue of the newsletter, our Joliet Convention is being recast as the "Joliet Hawaiian Music Festival" sponsored by the Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association. Not only is the name being changed, but also the format will be a little different. As shown in HSGA's Statement of Purpose, our primary purpose is to develop a global network of players and lovers of traditional Hawaiian music, as well as to encourage the study, teaching, and performance of the Hawaiian steel guitar. To that end, in addition to the steel guitar, we want to open up the festival to 'ukulele and slack key guitar.

We need to create a larger attendance than we have seen in the past. Let's face it—our attendance at Joliet has been decreasing for the past five or six years while costs have been increasing. That is a trend that is not sustainable. From members' comments at last year's membership meeting it was evident that we had to try new things. We had to appeal to *all* lovers of Hawaiian music. The board of directors and the Joliet committee decided to expand the scope of the convention.

Attendees this year will see no change whatsoever on Thursday and Friday. On Saturday there will be a Steel Guitar Showcase in the morning. All day there will be workshops for

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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 email address is hsga@hsga.org. Articles and photos should also be emailed directly to the newsletter editor at johnely@hawaiiansteel.com.

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steel guitar, 'ukulele and slack key, all going on at the same time. On Saturday evening, the lū'au and show will be held as usual.

Watch our website and future issues of the newsletter for additional details as they become available.

Joliet Guest Artist Announced

We are pleased to announce that this year's Honored Guest will be Alan Akaka. It's Alan's first visit in ten years. Start making your plans now and set aside the dates: October 4-6, 2012. Alan will conduct a steel guitar workshop as well as appear in daily music sessions. He will also be featured on Saturday's lū'au show. ■

It's Dues Time Again!

HSGA's membership year begins on July 1, 2012. Dues are now \$30 and all issues go out 'Air Mail' (see the insert). Don't miss out on the latest info on Hawaiian steel guitar, including news, instruction, steel tablature and photos.

New HSGA Japan Convention!

From Japan Coordinator, Tom Tohma

Our HSGA Japan membership, some 52 strong, has thankfully been an important part of the overall constituency of the club, but like many associations these days, aging and health problems threaten our numbers. To generate interest and gain new members, I am planning the First HSGA Japan Convention to be held on September 9 in downtown Tokyo at the old B-Flat club. The plan started out as a "try it someday" but gradually turned into a "let's do it!" among the many members I know. More than 20 bands from all over Japan will participate.

Overseas HSGA members are welcome to participate or perform. The cost is \$50 to help cover expenses. Please let me know by the end of July. You can reach me at: Akitomo "Tom" Tohma, 505 4-1-9 Hiroo Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 150-0012 Japan; Email: <akitomo-16@miracle.ocn.ne.jp>. Mahalo! ■

Performing a nice set at the Honolulu 2011 Convention, Japan's Hideko Kobayashi playing her Canopus steel guitar with Akira "Terry" Saito on bass guitar.





At the 2010 Kualoa Kanikapila (l. to r.) Greg Sardinha, Timi Abrigo, Ron Kanahale, Ron Johnson, Eddie Kaiama, and Kamaka Tom.

Kanakapila 2012 News

From Lanet Abrigo

Three North Shore siblings have been hard at work for over two years, perpetuating traditional Hawaiian music in Waimea Valley. This year, they continue their community-based event, the Waimea Valley Kanikapila, and proudly announce the birth of a second kanikapila at Bishop Museum!

Timi, Emily, and Quinn Abrigo's work on the Waimea Valley Kanikapila has brought many local musicians and families together. It has earned them an Opio Award for outstanding youth from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and it has become a television series on O'ahu's public access television station, 'Olelo TV. Known as the band Abrigo 'Ohana, these three keiki look forward to continuing to grow the Waimea Valley Kanikapila this year. With the loving support of Bishop Museum's Events Manager, Mele Apana, they look forward to expanding this grassroots effort to carry on traditional Hawaiian music into the heart of Honolulu.

Kanikapila is a traditional Hawaiian music jam session. The purpose of these events is to perpetuate Hawai'i's music and culture through song. The events are very family-focused, and open to all ages and skill levels. Since September 2009, the kanikapila have been held every third Sunday at Waimea Valley. The Bishop Museum Kanikapila will be held on the last Sunday of every month. Both kanikapila are free and open to the public.

On paper, the Waimea Valley Kanikapila appears to be just a jam session, but in person it is so much more. My

Coming: HSGA Board Elections

Look for ballots in the Spring issue to elect your board for the 2012-2014 term, results to be announced in the Summer issue.

children have been hosting this event for over two years, and I have yet to attend one that has not moved me to tears. What makes it even more beautiful are the venues, Waimea Valley and now, Bishop Museum. These two places have tremendous cultural significance to Hawaiians and their music. Being at the Waimea Valley Kanikapila is a spiritual experience. It's almost like the land beneath your feet is filling you with love for the music. I anticipate the Bishop Museum Kanikapila will also have a profound spiritual quality. We are very grateful to both Waimea Valley and Bishop Museum for opening the doors to support the perpetuation of traditional kanikapila.

2012 Waimea Valley Kanikapila Schedule

Dates: January 15, February 19, March 18, April 15, May 20, June 17; Location: Waimea Valley, North Shore O'ahu, 59-864 Kamehameha Hwy, Haleiwa, HI 96712-8411.

2012 Bishop Museum Kanikapila Schedule

Dates: January 29, February 26, March 25, April 29, May 27, June 24; Time: 1 to 4 PM; Location: Bishop Museum, 1525 Bernice St., Honolulu, HI 96817-2704. ■

'Legends of Steel' Concert News

From Isaac "Doc" Akuna

The Second Legends of Steel Concert will be held on Sunday, May 6 at the Grand Ballroom of the Pacific Beach Hotel. Once again we will be honoring the life works of those musicians who played significant roles in developing and disseminating the Hawaiian steel guitar. This year our honorees will include: Tau Moe, Andy Aiona, Freddie Tavares, Jules Ah See, and Barney Isaacs. The format will be similar to last year's event with some special surprises. ■

At last year's Legends Concert, the Kamehameha Schools Alumni Glee Club (left) under the direction of Aaron Mahi and a Hawaiian quartet ably led by Isaac Akuna on his frypan steel guitar.



Hawaiian Steel Guitar at La'ie Elementary School

From Ka'iwa Meyer, Grandniece of Joseph Kekuku and President of the Joseph Kekuku Foundation

It was Isaac Akuna who first introduced me to HSGA and the club's various efforts to honor my uncle, Joseph Kekuku. In 2009 I was invited by the State of Hawai'i to receive the governor's proclamation honoring Joseph Kekuku as inventor of the Hawaiian steel guitar. I have since attended various HSGA events, a Kamehameha Schools presentation honoring my uncle, and the Maiki Aiu Foundation's recognition of Joseph Kekuku last year.

I wanted to honor my uncle with a project to keep his name and legacy alive at home and abroad. My idea was to teach steel guitar in Joseph Kekuku's hometown of La'ie on O'ahu at La'ie Elementary School, the school that both my uncle and I had attended.

I have worked 25 years for the State of Hawai'i Department of Education as a school social worker—12 years in the Windward District Office and 13 years in the Maui District Office. I have a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's in social work. I was housed at La'ie Elementary School and my daughter did her student teaching there under fourth grade teacher Cindy Tuimaunei. It was Cindy who agreed to let me teach steel guitar to her fourth grade students.

The first class was taught by Benjamin Cheney in February of last year. Ben, along with his brothers and father Steve Cheney, has often been featured on steel guitar at the Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC) lū'au shows in La'ie.

The second class is currently being taught by Ho'oulu Cabrinha, who is the great-great-grandnephew of Joseph Kekuku. He has completed his LDS mission for the



The steel guitar class at La'ie Elementary School with teacher Cindy Betham and steel guitar instructor Ho'oulu Cabrinha.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and is now attending college. He also plays steel guitar at the PCC shows. The class, which has 21 students, will run eight months from October 15, 2011 through May 17, 2012. It is our hope that many of those students will be able to continue their study with Ho'oulu or that I may be able to continue the program in the fifth grade. Three other fourth grade classes have also expressed interest in our program.

The class meets every Thursday from 12:30 to 1:30 PM in the classroom of teacher Cindy Betham with the approval of the principal. It is satisfying to know that these young fourth graders are now familiar with the Hawaiian man from La'ie who invented the steel guitar.

Putting the program together on behalf of my uncle, Joseph Kekuku, was an inspiring and rewarding endeavor, even though expensive. I hope to explore funding opportunities in order to continue my uncle's Hawaiian steel guitar lessons.

Members, if you would like to make donations to help with Ka'iwa's steel guitar program or would like more information, please contact her at: Ka'iwa Meyer, P.O. Box 193, Pu'unene, HI 96784; Email: kaiwameyer@hawaiiintel.net Tel: 808-280-6336.

Another cool shot of the La'ie Elementary steel guitar class.



Buy & Sell

Instruments Wanted

Wanted continuously by Michael Cord for his awesome collection: All models of vintage lap steels (like Hilos, Konas, Weissenborns, Rickenbackers), vintage amps and basses. Contact Michael Cord toll free at (877) 648-7881.

Note: Buy & Sell ads are free for paid-up members.

COCO WIRE

We've been hearing great things about the film, "The Descendants," which won this year's Golden Globe award for Best Picture. At the end of the film, during the rolling of the credits you hear **Ernie Tavares's** arrangement of "Hi'ilawe," which was released on the Crescendo Records LP "Hukilau Hulas," and also featured his brother **Freddy Tavares**, **Bernie Ka'ai**, and Vince Akina.

From **Helen Coker** at press time: "**Ernie Coker** has been very, very ill. He is home now but we have discontinued hospice care. He seems to be beating the odds and is feeling stronger. But he has lost 80 pounds and has a long way to go. Thanks for all the prayers from around the world." We're pulling for you, Ernie!

From **Alan Akaka**: "The Henry Kaleialoha Allen Hawaiian Steel Guitar Festival is set for Friday to Sunday, April 20-22 at the Ka'anapali Beach Hotel on Maui. I'll be there along with **Greg Sardinha**, "**Lion**" **Kobayashi**, **Duke Ching** and **Jack Aldrich** for live performances, music workshops and late night kanikapila sessions."

From member **Ray Aubrey**: "The Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities (HUIC) was held on January 8-10 at the Ala Moana Hotel, an academic conference bringing together professors from America, Canada and Asia. **Kamaka Tom** and his band played in the Hibiscus Ballroom, just across the hall from the Garden Lanai room where **Jerry Byrd** held his steel guitar ho'olaule'as in the

A terrific shot of Dee Reddington and Chris Kennison at Chris's gig at the Arizona Opry with several HSGAers in attendance.



HSGA Office "honcho" Kamaka Tom performing at the Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities in January.

1980s. HUIC presented Kamaka with a donation for HSGA, and an invitation to join HSGA was extended to all the conference attendees."

This from board member **Chris Kennison**: "I'm playing 'Twilight Blues' and 'Silhouette Hula' on my frypan daily at the Arizona Opry to a thousand folks a day. The snowbirds have arrived. Cool thing is that when the emcee introduces me, he lets everyone know I'm a member of HSGA. Who knows? Someone may get curious and join up. But even cooler is I get to share the Hawaiian steel sound with lots of folks from around the world." Don't you hate guys like that? Hehe ... Chris, you da bomb! ■

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Gone at 103, 'Ukulele Legend Bill Tapia

We received word from HSGA Board member Pete Kahele a few months back about a nice get-together he had with uke king Bill Tapia, so we asked him to write it up for the newsletter. Soon, we were planning a full spread on Bill's career and recent activities until—irony of ironies—we received the following note from Pete one month short of Bill's 104th birthday: "The write-up I sent this past Saturday is about all we'll ever receive. Bill passed away last night in his sleep. Bill was pleased with the story when it was read to him at breakfast." Pete was the last person to speak with Bill at length. Given this set of circumstances, we thought it appropriate to simply proceed with the story as planned followed by a synopsis of his storied career. Here's Pete:

I met recently with Bill Tapia at his beautiful home in Westminster, California. When I arrived, he was in front of his house basking in the late morning sun. We greeted each other and got caught up with the latest gossip. When I explained to Bill that HSGA wanted to do an article about him, he was very gracious and eager to get started.

Bill "Tappy" Tapia was born in Honolulu on New Year's Day 1908 and grew up in Honolulu's Liliha neighborhood. This was Territorial Hawai'i with no paved roads or street lights. Bill mentioned that a neighbor had frequent get-togethers with Hawaiian singing, 'ukulele and guitar. The Hawaiian man who played the 'ukulele was very good, and Bill paid close attention to his style of playing every time they got together.

One day, Bill had the courage to ask the Hawaiian man if he could teach him how to play. He agreed but Bill had to get his own 'ukulele. He quickly went home and counted his money, which he kept stashed away in a tin can. Then, it was off to Manuel Nunes, a famous 'ukulele maker at the time. However, the price of a brand new instrument was too much for Bill. Manuel pulled out a used 'ukulele and offered it to Bill, but still he didn't have enough money to pay for it. Manuel asked him, "How much money do you have?" Bill pulled out his tin can and replied, "I only have seventy-five cents!" Manuel sold him his first 'ukulele on that day in 1915 and the rest is history.

A recent article in the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* noted that Bill continues to set records one way or the other. Veteran researchers say that it's safe to say that Bill Tapia is the oldest well-known professional entertainer still performing at the young age of 103. For years he has been the only performer who could introduce a standard with the words, "Here's a song I learned during World War I." In 1918, he came up with a unique arrangement of "Stars and Stripes



Forever" that has been copied and adapted by generations of Hawaiian musicians.

Although, Bill is known worldwide as a jazz 'ukulele player, he is also a very accomplished jazz guitarist. He also played upright bass and Hawaiian steel guitar. Bill played the D9th tuning and played it beautifully. On one occasion at his home, he played "Paradise Isle" and tore that song apart—the countless patterns he threw at it was awesome. As a jazz guitarist, Bill played with numerous bands around Honolulu and got to know the early steel guitar players of those times such as, Sol Ho'opi'i, Benny "King" Nawahi, Sam Ku West, Sam Koki, Dick McIntire, and many more!

Bill's first big break came from Andy Iona with the Grand Opening of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in 1927. In 2007, after an extensive renovation, the hotel celebrated it's Eightieth Anniversary with a Grand Re-Opening—it goes without saying that Bill was the only invited performer who had been on hand for the original opening!

Other steel guitarists that Bill came across during his career were Freddy Tavares, Danny Stewart and Jules Ah See. He even taught rhythm guitar to Billy Hew Len before the accident resulting in the loss of Billy's left hand. Said Bill, "Joe Custino was a very good friend and was known for his technique, Jake Keli'ikoa was like a brother to me, John and Pua Almeida were excellent steel guitarists, and so was Tommy Castro. Everybody knew Tommy." Bill lit up with

excitement reflecting on all the great steel players back in those early years. But I could see that Bill was getting tired and probably needed to take a nap. In closing, I asked, “Who do you feel was the best steel guitarist in Hawai‘i during your years as a musician?” With no hesitation, he replied, “David Keli‘i, a musician’s musician!”

Bill actually appeared with Keli‘i on the famed “Hawaii Calls” radio show broadcast from the Moana Hotel. This was probably in the late ‘40s or early ‘50s. Bill mentioned that Al Kealoha Perry was the bandleader in those days with David on steel guitar. Aside from performing with “Hawaii Calls” the band moonlighted under the name Singing Surfriders, and many of the early recordings of David’s steel playing were made with this group.

My friendship with Bill goes back several years, for the simple fact that he was a link to my grandfather Bill Kahele. Bill said that he would go over to my grandfather’s house and practice with him on the back porch. He even told me where they lived, which I confirmed with my uncle, including stories about my grandfather that I didn’t even know about.

My grandfather played with the Royal Hawaiian Band and several bands around Honolulu, earning him the nickname ‘Billy Band Boy’ which Bill recalled. Bill was also a very good friend of my great uncles Joe and Tony, who were the original Beach Boys along with Duke Kahanamoku on Waikīkī Beach.

Career Highlights

Bill Tapia’s accomplishments are too numerous to list with the space we have, but here are few high points.

When he was 12 years old Bill left school and started playing on Honolulu’s vaudeville circuit as a member of the Hawaiian Amusement Company, in part to help support his family. One of his trademarks was playing the ‘ukulele behind his head.

By the age of 15, Bill was focusing more on guitar and banjo, performing regularly at Waikīkī’s Moana Hotel. He was playing a lot big band dances including stints on jazz guitar for cruise ships going back and forth between Honolulu and the mainland.

By the ‘30s and ‘40s Bill had become a fixture of the Waikīkī big band music scene. During World War II he started his own orchestra called “Tappy’s Island Swingers,” and they often played at the old Honolulu Civic Auditorium. It became known as the “Blackout Ballroom” and they had to memorize all their music because during blackouts everybody had to play and dance in total darkness!

After the war, Bill moved his family to San Francisco and taught guitar and ‘ukulele lessons full time. He also played jazz guitar at local spots in both Northern and Southern California. He performed on the Harry Owens TV Show circa the early ‘50s.

Bill retired in 1998 and moved from Northern California to the town of Westminster in Southern California. His story might have ended there were it not for a chance meeting with former HSGA member Alyssa Archambault. Alyssa’s dad, George Nainoa, was nephew of Sam Nainoa, cousin of Joseph Kekuku, who attended Kamehameha Schools for Boys at the same time Joseph did. The two boys played on stage together at school concerts, Sam on violin and Joseph on his invention, the steel guitar. Here’s part of Alyssa’s interesting story on Bill Tapia’s exit from retirement—thanks to Lorene Ruymar for passing this story along to us:

“In 2002, while doing research into my family history, I contacted Bill Tapia ... to see if he’d known any of my relatives. He hadn’t, but we soon became good friends.

“From Hawai‘i to the mainland, Bill’s career spans the Twentieth Century. He performed with many of the leading singers and musicians of the



day, including Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Fats Waller, Billie Holiday and Hawaiian music legends Johnny Noble, King Benny Nawahi and Sol Ho‘opi‘i. He also became a well-known teacher of the ‘ukulele. Among his students were Shirley Temple, Clark Gable, the Little Rascals, Jimmy Durante, Janet Gaynor, John Gilbert, Joe E. Brown, and Arthur Godfrey.

“At the time I met Bill, he was teaching but no longer performing professionally, and it became a mission of mine to expose his talent to a new audience. First I booked him on shows in various local venues, and then I set up concert tours in California and Hawai‘i. I also arranged for newspaper, radio and local TV interviews wherever he was playing.

“In the fall of 2007, Bill was poised to turn one hundred years old. To celebrate this momentous occasion, I decided to produce a concert featuring Bill and a number of his special friends. It was held at a magnificent venue, the Warner Grand, a historic art deco theatre in San Pedro, California. It was actually Bill’s second engagement at the Warner Grand. The first took place

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HSGAers, Meet Member Ernie Coker

So many of our members go back to Hawaiian music's golden age and have rubbed shoulders with Steel Guitar's great artists from yesteryear. World travelers Ernie and Helen Coker from Texas are no exception. Here's Ernie to share some of his experiences in Steel Guitar's "fast lane."

I believe I can honestly say that my family was musically inclined. I came into this world at the start of the Great Depression, and like so many American families we were very poor.

Entertainment was not available in the abundance that it is today, but one source that was available was music. Almost no one had money to spare for the purchase of good instruments, but there always seemed to be a guitar, fiddle, banjo or mandolin around. I have always loved music and some of my earliest memories were of my mother raising the strings at the nut of some old guitar, tuning it to what I believe was E major, and playing tunes such as "Spanish Fandango." That is still one of my favorite tunes. I wish I

had her talent. My father, it seemed, could play just about anything with strings on it.

I was fortunate that during my years in school they had music classes. This provided me with a very basic understanding of scales and harmony. Sometime later this limited knowledge would be very helpful.

During the course of my military service in the Second World War, I was stationed in Southern California. I was fortunate in that a very good steel guitarist was a member of the church I attended. It seemed only natural that we would become friends. He was a very ardent fan of Sol Ho'opi'i. At the time Sol was doing religious work, and he was doing a program at a local church. Of course, we were in the front row seats. My friend was engrossed in Sol, but I couldn't avoid being a little bit distracted by some of the people who were appearing there with Sol. It was a trio called the Gospel Stars. Playing upright bass with this trio was the cutest brunette. The race was on. I still don't know "who caught who," but



Ernie Coker in 1955 with his Rick Electro.

I have been married to that bass player now for over 63 years!

All this experience served to refresh my love of the steel guitar. Helen already had a Rickenbacher guitar and amp. She says that I married her to get use of the instrument!

Through Helen, I became acquainted with Sol, and I was fortunate that he spent some time teaching me. He was one of the world's finest gentlemen, but he could also cause you to have nightmares. He would be giving me a lesson and would rattle off one of those wild dippy-doodle choruses he used to play and then tell me to play it. If I couldn't play it to his satisfaction (which seemed to be most of the time), his comment would be on the order of "you've got two hands and ten fingers just like me. If I can do it, so can you."

Around this time I became the steel guitarist for the Gospel Stars. We were doing a radio program on KFSG, the station for the Angeles Temple. And, of course, Sol would listen and review every mistake I made at the next lesson. However, during all this we developed a friendship that endured until his passing in 1953.

Ernie Coker's dance band, the Jesters: (l. to r.) Jay Pallard, Ernie on guitar, Charlotte Brown (drums), Brent Singleton (piano), and Tom Frensley.



During this period Bob Dunn and Leon McAuliffe had introduced the steel guitar to the western swing field and to say that it was widely accepted is a gross understatement. There were hundreds of “joints, clubs, or dives”—call them what you wish—in the Los Angeles Basin. Every club had a band, and a band was just not a band without a steel guitar.

I think you can understand that an aspiring young steel guitarist was going to use the opportunity to gain professional experience, and besides, we were getting paid.

I learned a lot from the experience and had the opportunity to become acquainted with such folks as Speedy West, James “Joaquin” Murphey, Noel Boggs and others. These people had a great deal to offer the up-and-coming guitarist. I spent many evenings leaning over the bandstand rail at the clubs they were working. I also heard many of the great Hawaiian players: Eddie Bush at the Ambassador, Danny Stewart at the Hollywood Roosevelt, and Fred Tavares all over. Having the opportunity to watch and listen to these artists was great. And they were more than willing to explain things and help in any manner possible.

The use of steel guitar in western bands decreased considerably around 1960. I switched and worked with pop swing groups until 1972. At that time it became necessary to make some serious decisions about my future. I had a very responsible job in industry and music did not appear too promising, so with much regret, the guitars went into their cases and into storage.

When I retired from the business world in the early ‘90s, the first thing I did was to grab my first love, the steel guitar. Shortly after, we began hearing of the steel guitar clubs. Wow! What a treat to belong to clubs like HSGA and AISGC. To hear the artists and mingle with the club members has been a wonderful experience. Helen and I hope it continues for many years. ■



Ernie Coker trading licks with eighteen-month-old daughter, Paula (1956).

Steel and Uke from the “Happy Haole”

This is Erich Sylvester from San Francisco. I’m a new member, but I’m not a steel guitar player, though I did play some dobro long ago in a bluegrass band. I recently released a CD titled *Hapa Haole Hit Parade*, which includes 14 classic hapa haole songs from the era before World War II. My band name is Hot Steel & Cool Ukulele. I sing the songs and play ‘ukulele, and all the songs feature a virtuoso steel guitarist from here in the Bay Area. Four steel players are on the CD: Ken Emerson, Sean Allen, Don McClellan, and Brad Bechtel. Ten of the tracks feature a National resonophonic guitar and four tracks are electric. Steel guitar is strongly featured on every track. I think the steel guitar is a wonderful counterpoint to the singing voice, and I especially enjoy a jazz style of Hawaiian steel guitar.

I recently taped a Territorial Airwaves radio show with Harry Soria Jr. in Honolulu, which was streamed from

the AM-940 website for three weeks through February 2. Harry has been hosting the Territorial Airwaves show for 33 years, and his father hosted Honolulu radio shows during the pre-war era. Usually Harry plays old recordings from the era before statehood, but he also plays some new recordings like mine if the songs are from that era.

Songs aired on the show included: “Hula Blues,” “Heat Wave,” “I’m Pau,” “All Pau Now,” “Sophisticated Hula,” “Makin’ Wicky Wacky,” “Red Opu,” “Hilo Hattie,” and “Becky, I Ain’t Coming Back.” The show can be streamed from this link: www.am940hawaii.com/Player/101207321.

You can hear samples of the tracks at CD Baby where the CD can be purchased and tracks downloaded. Just search under ‘erich sylvester’. The CD is also available from Amazon, Mele.com, and Grassskirt.co.uk in the UK. The CD Baby page includes detailed notes on all the songs.

I also appeared on a radio show here in the Bay Area last November on KCSM, which is “all jazz all the time.” Host Mal Sharpe played several tracks and we talked about the history of the songs and the classic steel guitar bands that made them famous. I hope you enjoy my singing of these classic songs as well as the hot steel played by my collaborators. You may write to me at erichsylv@sonic.net. With much aloha, Erich Sylvester, the happy haole. ■



Lei No Kaiulani

(John Edwards)

Medium Waltz ♩ = 90

Arrangement by Alan Akaka

Steel Gtr. (C6th)

Audio version: contact Alan Akaka at info@kekulamele.com

B C F#dim C

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

21 C7 F

T	10	7	4	3	5	4	5			
A	10	7	3	3	5	4				
B							5			

25 Ab7 C Am

T	8	8	7	8	7	8	8	8
A			7		7	7	7	
B	8	8						

29 G7 D7 G7 C

T	7	9	7	9	7	8	10	9	11	12
A							9	9		
B								10	12	

Lei No Kaiulani (Continued)

C C C7 F C

T	4	5	7	4	5	5	7	8	7	5
A	3	5	7					8	7	5
B				4	5	5	7	7	5	5

2nd time – play single-string melody (top note) thru measure 40 -----

38 D7 G7 C C7

T				4	5	7	4
A		5	7	3	5	7	
B	5	5	7				4

43 F D7 G7 D7 G7 C

T	5	4	5	12	9	8	7	9	7	9	7	8	10	9	11	12
A				12	9								9	9		
B	5	4	5												10	12

48 D7 G7 Ab7 C

T	10	9	7	8	8	8		12	12	24	24	24	24	24	24
A		9	9										12	12	
B			7	8	8					12	12				

let ring----- let ring----- slide all

Hawaiian Steel in West Texas

From member Alvin Wood

Back in the 1930s there were a number of one- and two-room school buildings south of the West Texas towns of Roscoe and Loraine, about an hour's drive west of Abilene, Texas. After one of them was destroyed by fire in 1936—the school in the small town of Maryneal—five school districts consolidated in what was to become the largest school district in the state of Texas area-wise. The new Highland Independent School District covered some 252 square miles. When it rained the school's five buses would sometimes get stuck in the mud (several of the roads are now paved).

Although the school district was large, the enrollment was small. Some ranches covered several square miles. Highland started with 17 teachers and 312 students—among them my sister Betty and me. The school did not have a music program, although a few students had transferred from schools that had school bands.

In 1940, when Betty and I were high school juniors, the superintendent, Mr. Rufus Walker, asked me to establish a music program and was able to provide a classroom for practice. Both Betty and I had a strong background in music. I had been taking steel guitar lessons from I. D. Dunagan beginning in 1935. My mother played piano and loved Hawaiian music, and there was a lot of Hawaiian sheet music around the house. Betty was very musical and could pretty much play anything she heard. I read music and so had no difficulty directing band instruments and launching the program for Mr. Walker. The stringed instrument players called themselves The Highlanders and played a 30-minute radio show every Saturday afternoon for over two years on

Alvin and sister Betty playing a program in Shreveport in 1959.



The Highlanders band taken in 1942 featuring Alvin Wood (left) and including his sister Betty Wood.

station KXOX in Sweetwater. I played steel and directed the band playing country, pop, and Hawaiian music.

KXOX went on the air in 1938. Betty and I auditioned at ages 12 and 14, and played the first live music program on the station. We called the show “Songs of Hawaii” and played every Saturday morning for four years with Betty on Spanish guitar and me on steel. Dunagan used the fact that a couple of his students had a weekly radio show as advertising!

In 1942, Betty graduated as valedictorian at age 15—I graduated the same year at age 17. Following our graduation, we continued “Songs of Hawaii” for another year on station KRBC in Abilene, Texas. I should mention that Betty is a former HSGA member, and I’ve been a member for the past eleven years.

After graduating, I immediately got a job at Dunagan Music in Abilene. In fact, Mr. Dunagan was waiting for me to graduate so he could turn over operation of the store to me. He had decided to move to Lubbock, Texas to open a chain of music schools in the Texas Panhandle including the area south of Midland-Odessa and also covering parts of New Mexico. I drove from town to town teaching Hawaiian steel guitar, and taught two days a week at the Abilene store. I was living in my grandparents’ home in Abilene. My grandfather, J.B. Cranfill, was one of the founders of Abilene Christian University.

Shortly thereafter war broke out and gasoline rationing followed. In 1943, I was called into the military, and as a result Dunagan close his Abilene store. I was assigned to the U.S. Army Air Corps as a radio operator. I carried my Oahu Tonemaster steel guitar with me to every post where I was stationed! I went to the Philippines and brought along an acoustic steel guitar. I played with several musicians in the military, among them, a guitar player who appeared regularly

Continued on Page 20

How Skype Works

By Alan Akaka

What is Skype? Skype is a proprietary Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) service and software application that allows users to communicate with each other by voice, video and text messaging.

As a teacher this is a major breakthrough because now I am able to conduct lessons with students around the world in real time. And it's all for free. There is a paid subscriber service, but we don't need to go there. I can also send files while the lesson is in progress.

Skype can be downloaded by going to www.skype.com and choosing the download for Mac or PC. It's painless and free and the setup is rather simple.

Initially Skype account names need to be exchanged between teacher and student. Next, one party needs to send the other party a "Contact Request." Once accepted, the contact's name is added to the Contact List and both parties can then see when each other is logged on to Skype.

Basic equipment for a Skype lesson:

- PC or Mac computer
- Broadband Internet connection
- Webcam
- Speakers and a microphone (built-in or external)
- Steel guitar and amplifier
- Good lighting

I highly recommend an external webcam which can be adjusted and positioned so the steel guitar can be viewed clearly on the other end. Having a high quality webcam adds to the visual quality of the lesson. The problem with a built-in webcam is—no matter how good it is—it cannot be repositioned without losing screen visibility, which will be problematic during the lesson. I suggest for your consideration the Logitech for Mac or for PCs. Go with the Logitech 9000 or higher. I tested the Logitech 9000 on both Mac and PC and was very satisfied with the video quality delivered. And the video quality makes a difference because if I can't see your hand movements clearly, it makes teaching more difficult. No matter what brand you choose make sure it is compatible with your computer.

The steel guitar should be set up either on its legs, stand, tabletop or on the lap where the webcam can point to.

Having a good quality speaker system is a bonus not only for the lesson, but for mp3 playbacks.

The most important thing: put time and effort in practice and be prepared for the lesson. The best time to practice is



A typical, simple Skype setup for either student or teacher.

soon after the lesson when items are still fresh in the brain. Then schedule practice times during the week. Time invested in practicing will reap benefits. More time, more benefits. In other words there are no shortcuts to improvement.

On some occasions I have experienced bad video or audio connections, which caused me to hang up and call back with the hope of getting a better connection. Sometimes it worked. Sometimes it didn't. In a worst-case scenario, I would just reschedule the lesson, and that has only happened on a couple of occasions. The problem is not always with Skype. Sometimes closing apps helps or simply rebooting the computer.

For help or more information on Skype, point your browser to: <https://support.skype.com>. ■

The Skype Experience

By John Ely

Alan has done a fine job of laying out the basics of using Skype for steel lessons. The remarkable thing about it is that the steel guitar world has been plagued for a couple of generations by a lack of teachers. Skype is changing that! Now instruction is just a few mouse clicks away.

There is no substitute for face-to-face lessons, but with a good Skype connection the teacher can get a more than adequate view of the picking hand and bar hand. For example, if I want to check a student's blocking I can have the student place the camera near the bridge aimed toward the nut. To check picking details, you can place the camera at the other end of the guitar and aim toward the bridge. Once basic hand mechanics are established, a basic shot from the front that includes the bridge and nut is usually sufficient.

The one limitation that cannot be overcome is the nature of the Skype network. It is not a duplex connection. In other words, sound can only go in one direction at a time. If both

parties try to talk or play at the same time, the audio cuts out or distorts on both ends. Interestingly, if both parties have an Intel Mac and a fast connection, I've experienced times where sound goes both ways at the same time. I'm guessing that a fully duplex connection is in Skype's future.

Another tricky element is the built-in delay over the network. When you say something, the other party doesn't hear it for a fraction of a second. It's a small delay but enough that both parties can sometimes end up talking at the same time! But you soon learn to pause slightly before responding to someone to make sure they're through talking.

Just a few more observations to tack on to what Alan has already laid out. I make a habit of rebooting my computer before each Skype session. This clears out memory and helps avoid glitches during the session. Also, it helps if you don't have your email program open or any other program that polls the Internet, which can take away computer resources from Skype.

It is not unusual for the audio or video to degrade during the session. In my experience if both parties quit and relaunch Skype and then reconnect, the problem often goes away. But not always, as Alan points out. I, too, have had to reschedule lessons on occasion due to poor network quality, but this is relatively rare.

One issue worth mentioning is lighting. Avoid being backlit, say from a bright window behind you. That results in a very underexposed view for your teacher. Overhead lighting seems to work quite well. Just make sure the light source is not in the field of view of your camera.

After two years teaching over Skype, I still get this feeling of amazement when calling a student from Australia or Italy or remote locations in Canada. And the network quality will only continue to improve as Internet speeds and bandwidth increase. ■

Board member Ivan Reddington plays backup behind Arizona member Margie Mays at the inaugural SWSGA non-pedal session.



HSGAers at the Arizona Opry: (clockwise) Donna and Frank Miller, Opry performer Chris Kennison, and Wally and Peg Pfeifer.

The SWSGA 'Non-Pedal' Room

By Ivan Reddington

This was the first year for a non-pedal room at the Ninth Annual Southwest Steel Guitar Association (SWSGA) meeting, which was held at the Crescent Sheraton in Phoenix on January 19-21, 2012. The hotel was very nice with a nice room for the lap steel players. Chuck Lettes was asked to set up the Saturday afternoon non-pedal program, and he contacted several known players to play. Steel guitar performers included Billy Easton, Chris Kennison, DeWitt ("Scotty") Scott, Sharon Denney, Doug Livingston, Ivan Reddington, Margie Mays, Rose Sinclair, Chuck Lettes, Carco Clave, and Bobby Black.

The music varied from country, Hawaiian and pop to semi-classical. The session was well attended and Chris Kennison played an outstanding set of Hawaiian and country music. Chris also told the audience about HSGA and our desire to train future lap steel players. He played his Rick Aiello guitar that resembles a Rickenbacker frypan.

Chris is a regular performer at the Arizona Opry in Apache Junction, Arizona. On the evening prior to the start of the SWSGA meeting, many of us caught his show, which included dinner and a full-on show covering several styles of music with a cast of over ten performers. The food was excellent and the musicians were all great. Our HSGA group—including Wally and Peg Pfeifer, Frank and Donna Miller, Don Mays and Dee Reddington—managed to collect at a common table and had a pleasant evening. Chris played nice steel solos on both pedal and non-pedal guitars and also sang with the group. Their show runs through April in Arizona then moves to Estes Park in Colorado for the summer. For details about their winter and summer program go to their website at azopry.com. ■

New Steel Festival in England

From member Digby Hardy

The South of England Steel Guitar Festival (SESGF 2011)—held on Saturday, April 30 and Sunday, May 1, 2011 in the village hall of Long Ashton, a small village just south of Bristol—was the first held in the UK in several years. Since the demise several years ago of the Newbury Steel Guitar Festival run by Gerry Hogan there were no venues where steel guitarists of all persuasions could meet. But, buoyed up by the success of the Chanos International Steel Guitar Festival held each year in France, we decided to try out the formula in the UK.

The idea behind both festivals is to get people to play their guitars rather than listen to the great and good of the steel guitar world, whilst hoping that some really good players show up to add a little shine to the proceedings. Also a general meet involving pedal, lap and dobro type guitars does create an exciting ambiance.

For SESGF 2011 each player was allocated two 20-minute sessions, which limited the number of players we could accommodate. We had 13 players with partners and friends making up around 46 people, which was very gratifying to us—we hadn't expected so many for the inaugural event. The best thing was the variation in playing quality and ability from the outstanding pedal steel of Dave Hartley and the sweet sound of Kevin Brown on his Weissenborn to absolute beginners.

The musical offerings were quite varied, from country and Hawaiian, to blues and songs from the musicals. What

Unexpected guests at the Chanos festival—the Cokers! Ernie on steel, wife Helen on bass and daughter Linda (left) on 'ukulele.



At the 2011 Chanos Int'l Steel Guitar Festival, Rene and Nora Ranti backed by Digby Hardy (left) and Rod King on steel guitar.

was very gratifying was the easy camaraderie between all the players. David Hartley and Kev' Brown are highly respected figures, but their easy going personalities encouraged rank beginners to follow them on stage in complete ease—well, with as much complete ease as they could muster under the circumstances; in many cases there was a noticeable increase in tremolo!

The Sunday session ended with “Now is the Hour” with many an “Aloha” and “See you next year.” I suspect that most returned home with a determination to practice and improve their playing for SESGF 2012, which is planned for May 26-27, 2012.

Chanos International Steel Guitar Festival, France, September 16-18, 2011

The Chanos Int'l Steel Guitar Festival (CISGF) is now a well-established part of the European steel guitar calendar and many of the players from all over Europe have come to know each other very well. It, too, is a festival for players to come and play with no auditions; we just want people to improve by playing their guitars. Last year we had too many players to cope with, given that we had only one stage. Playing starts on Saturday morning and most players want to leave after lunch on Sunday. CISGF also hosts the European Steel Guitar Hall of Fame (ESGHoF) medal presentation ceremony at a gala dinner on Saturday evening, which means we lose about three hours of playing time. While we were considering our options, the recession in 2011 came to our rescue and has given us some extra time to consider our reorganization; we were down from 23 players in 2010 to 15 players in 2011, a number we easily coped with.

Hawaiian music is very popular with French, German and Italian players, while the Brits have the players with the deepest grounding and knowledge of the genre. The French

prefer to play Hawaiian on lap steel, the Germans prefer pedal steel and the Italians generally go for Weissenborn or acoustic instruments. It's a generalization, I know, but more or less true.

Two ESGHoF 2011 Laureates, Hans De Jong of the Netherlands and Mark Horn of Germany, attended the festival to receive their medals and also took part in the festival. An interesting point here is that the only condition for playing at the festival is that you have to buy a ticket—no matter how good you are. Both coughed up their 12 euros without demur. Such gentlemen. Coy Pereira was also posthumously honored and his daughter Rosy attended to receive his ESGHoF medal.

To our astonishment, whilst a group of early arrivals were having an impromptu dinner outside the village cafe on the Friday evening, Ernie and Helen Coker drove up accompanied by their daughter Linda and son-in-law Frank Taylor. We all knew that Ernie had been very ill after CISGF 2010 and had no idea they were coming. Still it was a surprise and a pleasure to see them and they played for us.

CISGF 2012 will be the fifth festival so we plan to do something special and are expecting a lot of players. Our current preoccupation is with organizing the event to accommodate everyone.

Whilst both these festivals are increasing in popularity and support, we must also ask ourselves, "Where next for the steel guitar?" It is quite clear that the first generation of Hawaiian aficionados now reside in that great grass shack in the sky and we, the second generation, the "sixty pluses" are heading that way, but there is not much sign of a third generation. The same is true for country and the pedal steel guitar, just one generation behind the Hawaiians. But my musings on this matter are for another article perhaps. ■

Performing at Honolulu 2011, Tokyo member Motoyuki Suzuki.



At Joliet 2011, John Tipka with his "home-brewed" steel guitar!

Treasurer's Report

(as of December 31, 2011)

General Fund	\$21,158.04
Scholarship Fund	\$13,880.53
Joliet Checking	\$626.92
Japan Account	\$2,941.61
Grand Total	\$38,607.10

It's Dues Time Again!

Remember, HSGA's membership year begins on July 1, 2012. Dues are \$30 and all issues go out 'Air Mail' (see the insert).

"Pedal to the metal" at the 2011 Lei Day show, Yoshinori Nihachi.



CLOSING NOTES

Lorne Cherneski (April 4, 1932 - November 23, 2011)

We recently received the sad news of Lorne's passing from his family. Lorne was a member of HSGA from 1995 to 2011, and he and his wife Ruth made a number of trips to HSGA events. Lorne was a darned good steel player, and was accompanied by Ruth on 'ukulele. Veteran members of HSGA fondly remember them, and their names still come up in conversation. The family submitted the following to us:

"Lorne was born and raised on a farm in the middle of the Canadian prairies, about as far from the influence of Hawaiian music as you can imagine. In his youth, he was taken with Hawaiian music he occasionally heard in the evening on the family radio. Although farm life of that era offered little free time, Lorne taught himself to play rhythm guitar, and in high school joined the school orchestra where he earned a reputation as a very good player.

"After graduation he started working as a teacher, and with some of his first earnings he purchased a single-neck Hawaiian steel and taught himself to play that, too. Before long he was play-

Lorne Cherneski performing at the 1997 HSGA Convention in Honolulu.



ing steel in local bands. He upgraded to a double-neck Fender steel guitar and tube amplifier. He played this combination for the rest of his life, and he loved the rich tones they produced.

"He stopped teaching to play professionally with several country and western bands in Western Canada—his own, and those of others including Ness Hubic, Evan Kemp, Eddie Mehler, Smiling Johnny, Bud O'Shay, and Steve Bandura. Lorne met his future wife Ruth while playing at Patterson's Barn, a big dance venue in Winnipeg. They were soon wed. As music didn't pay all that well, Lorne returned to teaching, and a family followed over the next several years.

"Lorne continued to play steel for enjoyment throughout his teaching career, and practiced nearly every day. He played by ear and memory, and he could play lead on hundreds of tunes. He often learned a new tune by putting a record on and rehearsing until he could play it just like the recording. Then he would personalize it. Lorne amassed an extensive collection of Hawaiian records, but the stylings of Jerry Byrd were his favorite.

"After retirement, Lorne and Ruth started their own band, Northwest Country, and played Hawaiian, gospel, country and Ukrainian music locally and on the road. Ruth encouraged Lorne to record a CD of his playing and even arranged for studio time, but he humbly declined saying he wasn't good enough. It was also during these years that Lorne joined HSGA, and in 1997 the family traveled to Hawai'i. Playing steel in Honolulu and meeting his mentor Jerry Byrd were musical highlights for Lorne. In later years, Lorne and Ruth traveled to Joliet several times. Over the past decade Parkinson's slowly diminished Lorne's ability to play, but he kept at it and retained his love of music until the end.

"At the memorial service 'Aloha 'Oe' was played as his final farewell, and many of his favorite Hawaiian



Lorne playing live on the radio in 1955.

tunes were played during the reception afterwards. The HSGA connection has enriched our lives. From our family to yours, we thank you."

Vera Scott (1928 – 2011)

Some very sad news very close to home in the greater HSGA family. We received this somber note from Teresa Scott on November 20: "My mother Vera Scott, wife of Mike Scott, has put up a long hard battle against ovarian cancer for the past eight years. She was actually cancer free for five years but started rounds of chemotherapy again two years ago. She was rushed to the hospital last week and then admitted to palliative care. She is still there but the doctor is guessing that her time is short." Finally we got word on November 23 that she lost her battle. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Mike and his family.

Here is a portion of the beautifully written notice: "With inconsolable sadness we announce the passing of Vera after a heroic eight-year battle with cancer ... Vera worked tirelessly to provide for her family, ran several businesses out of her home and was Michael's sounding board, advisor and partner in life and business. Gardener, chef, world traveler, forever a Brit, she leaves

friends and family all over the world. Everything she touched she made special with her own flair. She was one of a kind who will never be replaced in our lives or our hearts.”

From Hal and Aina Smith: “We have known Mike and Vera for many years through the clubs and became good friends traveling to exotic locations together, the most memorable being to the Cook Islands and Tahiti in 2002. Vera had become an important part of our lives and it was with great sadness that we learned of her passing. We shall miss her greatly and our thoughts and prayers are with Mike now in his great loss. *Aloha Nui Loa, Vera, as always.*”

Dale Nightwine (July 25, 1929 – February 8, 2012)

We got the sad news about Dale’s passing from son-in-law Mike Boyd. Dale and Louise have been longtime members going back to the early days of our club. He and will be very much missed at club conventions. Here is an excerpt from the notice: “A lifelong area resident, Dale was born on July 25, 1929 in Kansas City, Kansas. He worked at TWA for 37 years, retiring as a supervisor in 1990. A Mason, Dale was a member of the Wyandotte Lodge #3 and a Delaware Lodge DeMolay Dad. He was a 20-year member of HSGA traveling to Hawai’i several times. Dale enjoyed riding motorcycles, had his private pilot’s license and was the head of his neighborhood watch. An avid woodworker, he was a cabinet-maker and made several different things for his family: baby chairs, cradles, rocking horses, toy planes... Dale was proud of his family and was eager to let you know how his children and their families were doing.” Our heartfelt best wishes go out to Louise and family. *Aloha a hui hou, e Dale.*

At the Joliet 2007 Convention, a lovely Saturday Night Lū’au photo of Mike Scott (left), Kay Das, and Vera Scott.



A touching photo of Louise and Dale Nightwine dancing together.

Takafumi Mimura

Sad news from our Japan Coordinator, Tom Tohma: “HSGA Japan member Takafumi Mimura passed away on February 20. He played ‘ukulele in his high school days and joined the Hawaiian Music Club during his years at Keio University. After graduation, he started his career as a banker at Suruga Bank’s New York branch. He retired in 2010, joined HSGA and performed in many Hawaiian bands. He attended the 2011 Hawai’i Convention and provided rhythm guitar backup for several steel guitar players. ■

‘UKULELE LEGEND BILL TAPIA Continued from Page 7

in 1935, only four years after the theatre was built! The show was glorious, with Bill telling heartwarming and hilarious stories, singing, and playing ‘ukulele and guitar, backed by some of the finest musicians in jazz.”

In March of 2004 Bill Tapia released his first solo recording titled *Tropical Swing*. Included on that album is a 1936 recording of Bill playing his famous arrangement of “Stars and Stripes Forever.” In 2001 Bill received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hawaiian Academy of Recording Arts. On April 23, 2004 Bill was officially inducted into the Ukulele Hall of Fame during the 2004 UkeFestWest concert at the Coconut Grove Ballroom in Santa Cruz, California. He followed up *Tropical Swing* with *Duke of Uke* (2005) and *Livin’ It Live* (2009).

He was perhaps the most beloved and revered figure in the ‘ukulele world, and everyone who ever knew him or saw him perform will be forever inspired. ■

Changed Email?

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

E Komo Mai! Welcome, New Members

Is your address correct? Please notify us!

UNITED STATES

LANET AND TIMI ABRIGO, 67-420 Aikaula St., Waiialua, HI 96791

JOHN TROUTMAN, 223 Beverly Dr., Lafayette, LA 70503

CHUCK CHRISTENSEN, 20W561 Diversey, Addison, IL 60101

EDWARD C. FRADY, 2552 A Palolo Place, Honolulu, HI 96816

OVERSEAS

PAUL OKUBO, 4-20-1 Sendagi, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, 113-0022 Japan

ALVIN WOOD Continued from Page 13

at the WLS National Barn Dance out of Chicago—sadly, I’m unable to recall his name.

I was discharged in 1946 and opened up a chain of music studios with headquarters in San Angelo, Texas and stores in Abilene and Sweetwater. Soon several students were playing so well that they played radio shows in San Angelo and Abilene.

One of my students, Hugh Blair, went on to make a name for himself in the country music world. He studied with me at my Sweetwater studio and after moving to Fort Worth at age 14, learned to play in the smooth style of Jerry Byrd. He played casuals with various groups including weekends with a new show in Fort Worth called the *Friday Night Frolic*. It was there that he played with country music legends Sonny James, Marty Robbins and Jim Reeves, who were new artists at the time. Hugh moved to East Texas in 1953, and through the early ‘50s and ‘60s played on Joe Shelton’s Reilly Springs Jamboree for such artists as George Jones, June Carter, Floyd Tillman, Bob Luman and Merle Kilgore.

In 1950, shortly after my discharge, the manager of KGKL in San Angelo asked me to start work part-time, as I had acquired a first-class radio license from my training in the military.

When the TV stations in San Angelo (KTXL) and Abilene (KRBC) went on the air, my teachers, students and I

played a regular television show aired on both stations called “The Sunday Serenaders.” One of the Wood Studio instructors was a native Hawaiian from Maui named Kimo Kalana. Kimo had played in two or three early South Sea movies before moving to San Angelo. Kimo added a great deal to the TV shows, and viewers were very interested to watch and listen to him. He played “Twelfth Street Rag” on ‘ukulele like I have never heard since.

I had the largest steel guitar store in the state of Texas from 1946 until 1957 when I moved to Nebraska to manage a radio station. I sold my music store and existing inventory to a store in Brownwood, Texas. I also managed stations in Decatur, Alabama and Bonham, Texas. In 1963, I bought an AM radio station in Dyersburg, Ten-

nessee and later added an FM station. I continued my Hawaiian music, playing an hour show of recorded music five days a week, including artists such as Dick McIntire, Jerry Byrd, Sol Ho‘opi‘i, Andy Iona, Sam Koki, and often some of my own recordings.

Radio broadcasting took a lot of my time, and I got rusty on steel guitar! At 87 years of age, I’m trying to recapture a little of my steel guitar playing ability. I live in Gallatin, Tennessee, part of greater Nashville. My son Larry and I play lū‘aus around the Nashville and West Tennessee area.

A couple of anecdotes that may be of interest: When I was very young, we lived on a ranch my folks bought in Arizona called the ‘Bar W’. Northeast of us was the ‘Lazy B’ ranch operated by the Day family—parents of former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Conner. A photo of my dad appears in a book she wrote titled *The Lazy B*. There was no school for me to go to, so my mother home schooled me for a year or two, and that’s when we moved to Abilene so I could go to school. My parents still owned the ranch when Interstate Highway 10 was built, and they sold the right-of-way as I-10 now runs through their ranch near the small town of San Simon. There were more rattlesnakes than cattle. ■

Alvin (far right) and his Hawaiian Guitar School at a recital in San Angelo, Texas (1947).

