

HSGA QUARTERLY

Published four times a year in Honolulu, Hawai'i
by the Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association

Volume 27, Issue 106

Spring 2012



Inside this Issue...

- 2 "Troubadours of Paniolo Music" by Carol Yotsuda
- 3 Joliet Hawaiian Music Festival Seminar Listing
- 4 HSGA Board Nominee Summaries and Photos
- 9 Coco Wire – News and Member Gossip
- 9 Buy & Sell – Member Advertisements
- 10 "Stardust" – Steel Guitar Arrangement by John Ely
- 12 "Jerry Byrd's 1st Recordings, Part II" by Anthony Lis
- 15 Disc 'n' Data – Recordings Review
- 15 Treasurer's Report from Kamaka Tom
- 16 "Vintage Axes" by Paul Warnik
- 18 "The Eddie Alkire Story" by John Ely
- 20 HSGA New Member Listing



At Henry Allen's steel guitar festival in Maui this past April, upcoming Joliet Guest Artist Alan Akaka (left), Duke Kaleolani Ching, Kiyoshi "Lion" Kobayashi, and Greg Sardinha.

New Joliet Festival Taking Shape

From Joliet Chairman, Don Weber

Changes in Joliet this year

As we indicated in the last issue, the new Joliet Hawaiian Music Festival, set for October 6-8, 2012, will look much the same as prior Joliet conventions, but there will also be a lot of changes moving forward.

Thursday will feature opening ceremonies and the usual music sessions throughout the day. On Thursday evening we will enjoy "Talk Story" with this year's Honored Guest, Alan Akaka from Kailua, O'ahu.

On Friday we will have the annual membership meeting first thing in the morning. The rest of the day we will have the usual music sessions. Friday

evening will be set aside for more music and jamming.

Saturday is the day of big changes. We are hoping to attract a lot of newcomers to our festival of Hawaiian music by appealing to those who may have an interest in 'ukulele and slack key, as well as steel guitar. "Steel Guitars in Concert" will be featured morning and afternoon. Steel guitar, slack key, and 'ukulele workshops will be held all day. All of these events will be going on at the same time, so you can attend any or all of them. See page 3 for a list of seminars planned. Saturday will indeed be a celebration of all Hawaiian music. As always the lū'au and floorshow will cap off the festival on Saturday evening. ■

HSGA QUARTERLY

Volume 27, Issue 106



OFFICERS

Paul Kim, President
Gerald Ross, Vice-President
Kamaka Tom, Secretary-Treasurer
Frank Della-Penna, Recording Secretary

DIRECTORS

Pete Kahele, California
Chris Kennison, Colorado
Terry Miller, Washington State
Capt. Ivan L. Reddington, Florida
Mike Scott, Ontario, Canada
Ian Ufton, Ontario, Canada

PAST PRESIDENT

Kamaka Tom

DIRECTOR EMERITUS

Jerry Byrd

JAPAN COORDINATOR

Akitomo "Tom" Tohma

QUARTERLY EDITOR

John Ely <johnely@hawaiiansteel.com>

WEBMASTER

Amy Pace <amy@hsga.org>

ORIGINAL CLUB FOUNDER

Lorene Ruymar (1985)

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.



At their *E Kanikapila Kakou* February show in Kaua'i, "Local Folk" featuring guitarist Gordon Freitas (left), Ricardo Gonzalez on bass, and Greg Sardinha on steel guitar.

Traveling Troubadours of Paniolo Music

E Kanikapila Kakou (EKK), translated 'Let's play music', is the Garden Island Arts Council's premier Hawaiian music program, now in its 29th year, featuring concerts in Kaua'i by Hawai'i's best entertainers on consecutive Monday nights during the early months of each year. Here is the council's executive director, Carol Yotsuda, to tell you about a recent performance by our own Greg Sardinha and fellow member Gordon Freitas playing lots of original material from their recent re-release of "Local Folk" celebrating the paniolo music tradition of the Big Island.

Musicians seem to have the tightest schedules. It is really a gift if any musician tells me, "I am at your disposal for the weekend. Where would you like us to play?"

And so it was with the Traveling Troubadours of Paniolo Music: Gordon Freitas, Greg Sardinha and Ricardo Gonzalez, who came to Kaua'i for their Monday, February 27, 2012 EKK show

a couple of days early both to immerse themselves in the Kaua'i rain (which they brought from O'ahu) and to share their music. On Saturday they played a few songs at the Waimea Town celebration (in the rain) and on Sunday they spent over an hour entertaining the long-term care patients at Mahelona Medical Center in Kapa'a (in the thunder, lightning and rain). At one point the crack of the thunder was so loud that it sounded like the man up above had dropped his cast iron skillet on the roof of Mahelona. Everyone visibly jumped! Good thing Gordon treated it as thunderous applause and upped his music and stories talking about Johnny Almeida, the history of the Parker Ranch, the vaqueros on the Big Island and more.

One of the fun things about attending a Garden Island Arts Council (GIAC) event is that everyone really gets into the mood, and so it was with the loyal volunteers at the Monday evening EKK performance. The 'ukulele gang opened the show with their vigor-

ous Mexican style strumming as they sang Gordon Freitas's "Big Island" and "Paniolo Yodel" with the audience joining in on the "Ee yo-da lay hee tee" choruses every time Gordon waved his arm.

"Nani Kaua'i" in a mellow *nahenahe* style, complete with the sweeping sounds of the steel guitar, conjured up nostalgia as four hula dancers and Aunty Bev Muraoka came up to hula. Even though dressed in jeans and tees, the dancers were reminiscent of swaying hula dancers with flowers in their hair under the swaying coconut trees ... it's the strains of romance that we associate with the steel guitar.

The musicians launched into an evening of songs about and for the paniolo and their cattle. I never knew there were so many songs in this genre but apparently the "Local Folk" music just touched the tip of the iceberg ... or should I say saddlehorn.

"Paniolo o ka Pakipika" is a song about how the cowboys rode their cows into the Pacific Ocean as described to Gordon by his paniolo grandfather whose job was to rope and drag the cattle to the boat while chasing sharks away. Through his compositions Gordon is writing the history of the Hawaiian paniolo in song. Whether based on tall tales or true experience, the songs describe the unique experiences of the colorful cowboys in the westernmost frontier of America. Greg could switch up the tempo from graceful hula music to a lively cattle-chasing beat, complete with the horse's whinny ... Uihaa!

With lyrics like "Some day I'll ride that painted pony down the mountain into the sea," these ballad-like songs tell stories, so the lyrics are all important. In addition, they repeat the same words over and over so if you don't get it the first, second or third time, you can get it the fourth time. Gordon's skill in songwriting is evident in this song written for his grandfather.

"Saddle City" in Waimānalo is a place where cowboys from all over the real western world of cowboys get together to compete for the title of "Jackpot Roping." Another competition that took place many years ago inspired another beautiful song. "Cheyenne Waiomina," or Wyoming, which sounds like a lovely girl's name, is the site where the famous steer roping championship took place many years ago. The famous paniolo Ikuu Purdy and other Hawaiian cowboys with flowers in their hats and jangling spurs swept the competition winning first, third and sixth place in spite of the less-than-hospitable conditions they experienced from the rodeo organizers. It was a big thing for a Big Island boy to win the tour, and Gordon wrote a song that just wants to rub it in.

Gordon shared a well-known song named after Teddy Roosevelt's "Rough Riders." Greg's steel guitar playing is truly outstanding in this song. Gordon pointed out that while he had the title of being Jerry Byrd's worst student, Greg was positively influenced by Jerry Byrd and is today very active in perpetuating the instrument. [ED: I'm guessing this title—if anything more than a stage gag—is most likely a playful jab at Greg's tendency to "buck the system."] Easily one of the outstanding steel guitar players in the state, Greg was given a chance to shine in the instrumental "Ka Nahona Pili Kai" inspired by a Japanese melody. "Kohala March" is another song that shows off Greg's virtuosity.

Gordo and Ricardo, the bass player, have a long history as they served in the Navy for over 20 years, but here they are years later playing music together. Although they never got to visit Koke'e in the pouring weekend rain, they decided to sing Ricardo's favorite song "Koke'e." Steel accompaniment takes me back to the days when Feet Rogers played with the Sons of Hawai'i. Not only did the four young hula dancers race up to share their hula, but Gordon added his sensuous hula moves

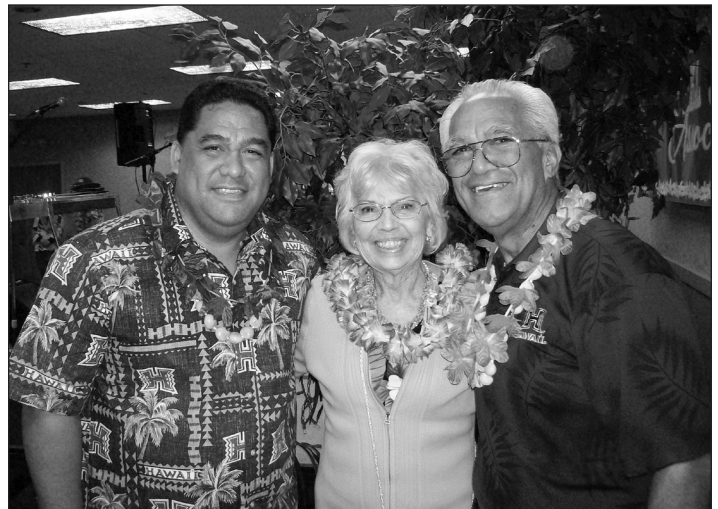
Continued on Page 20

Joliet 2012 Festival Workshops

Here is a summary of the Joliet workshop and seminars that are planned for Saturday, October 6 during the day. Look for seminar details and scheduling on our website and in the summer issue of the *Quarterly*.

- Beginning Hawaiian Steel (Gerald Ross)
- Intermediate Hawaiian Steel (Alan Akaka)
- Beginning Slack Key Guitar (Chris Kennison)
- Advanced Slack Key Guitar (Chris Kennison)
- Recording Tech Workshop (Chris Kennison)
- Jam Class and Jam Etiquette (Gerald Ross)
- Beginning Ukulele Workshops (Terry Truhart)
- Ukulele Sing-Along (Terry Truhart)
- Swing Ukulele (Gerald Ross)

An encore photo from our 2010 Joliet Convention, Guest Artists Casey Olsen (left) and father Hiram Olsen with Peg Pfeifer.



Nominees Vie For HSGA Board

It's that time again to vote for board members for the upcoming 2012-2014 term. The HSGA bylaws state that the maximum number of board members allowed is nine.

We asked the nominees to submit a brief summary of their history and qualifications, which are included below. Using the ballot included with your newsletter, please review the 12 candidates and vote for the 9 names you wish to see on the Board. The top nine vote getters will make up the 2012-2014 Board. Instructions are on the ballot and to be counted, ballots must be received by June 30.

All HSGA members *and* associate members are eligible to vote. Each newsletter contains one ballot. Associate members are allowed to make a copy of the ballot for voting purposes. Winners will be announced in the summer issue and officially take office on July 1, 2012. Send your completed ballot to: HSGA, 2434 Waioma'ō Road, Honolulu, HI 96816-3424.

Here are the photos and summaries from all 12 nominees.

Paul Kim

I currently serve as HSGA President. I was born and raised on O'ahu and grew up in Kailua. The first instrument that caught my interest was the 'ukulele. I also loved to sing and while in high school, joined the youth and Hawaiian choir at my local church, St. Anthony's in Kailua. This was the same church that Aunty Irmgard Aluli attended.

I started taking steel guitar lessons with Jerry Byrd in 1987 and learned for a full year how to tune, read music, everything that a steel guitarist would need to and should learn. This man was so knowledgeable about the "real" music business. He taught you every single thing you needed to know to

become a great steel guitar player and also a great all-around musician.

The first place that I played on the professional scene was at the 'Ihilani Hotel on the west side of O'ahu. It was there I met a lot of the musicians in the local scene, notably Ocean Kaowili. He mentioned that my style of playing was similar to "Feet" Rogers. I told him I used the same tuning and that I loved his style as well as the traditional folk music that Eddie Kamae and the Sons of Hawai'i played. He told me that he knew Eddie Kamae and that he could take me to meet him sometime. One night, Ocean told me to bring my steel to a gig in Mānoa. I agreed and showed up at the party, not realizing that it was actually to back up Eddie Kamae himself! Gradually I began to perform more and more with Eddie. In a nutshell that's how I became a member of the Sons of Hawai'i. I didn't know for sure, though, until I was given my own palaka shirt!

It is amazing to see the passion that HSGA members have for our beautiful instrument. As HSGA President, I want to thank everyone for their part in making this association a successful one. I am honored to be a part of the mission to perpetuate this wonderful instrument for future generations to enjoy.

Paul Kim from Kaneohe, Hawai'i



Kamaka Tom from Honolulu (Palolo)

Kamaka Tom

I am currently 59 years old and have been living in Honolulu since 1952. I have degrees in elementary education and Hawaiian studies from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I served as HSGA President from 2002-2008 and currently serve as Secretary-Treasurer.

Since 2002 I have managed the HSGA office in Honolulu with my wife Luz. We are responsible for keeping membership payment and donation records, accounts management, and processing of general correspondence for the membership. I also assist by setting up regular board meetings.

I served as Honolulu convention coordinator for the 2007, 2009 and 2011 conventions. I am currently employed full-time by the Honolulu municipal bus system. I am a part-time Hawaiian musician and steel guitarist. I have attended HSGA events regularly since the early 1980s and have attended and performed at all HSGA conventions from 2002 to 2012.

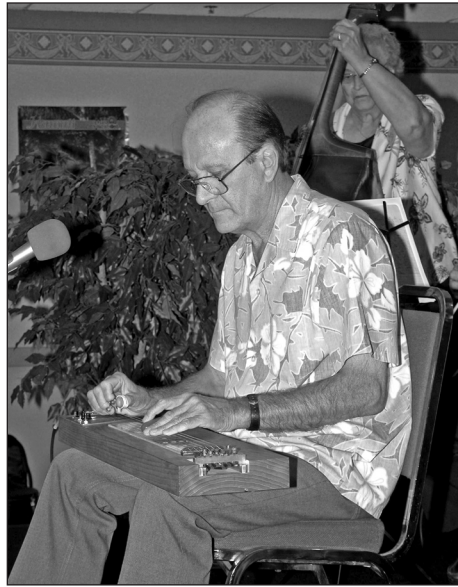
I would like to continue serving on the Board. I believe that I have qualifications that would allow me to contribute to maintaining HSGA as a viable, worthy organization that provides a valuable service to the community.

Chris Kennison

Aloha, all. I've been a member of HSGA since 1998 and currently serve on the HSGA Board. I've been playing steel guitar since about 1983. Initially I started on pedal steel and then started playing Hawaiian steel about 15 years ago. I lived in Hawai'i in 1972 through 1976 and programmed computers for the U.S. Naval Weather Service. While there I developed a deep appreciation and love of Hawaiian music. I learned slack key guitar while living there but never even thought about steel for some reason. I did hear Jerry Byrd play in Waikiki many times. I have been playing guitar for about 40 years and have performed for 30 years in bands and as a solo.

Currently I play steel and other strings (banjo, fiddle, dobro, guitar) full time for the Arizona Opry in Apache Junction, Arizona November thru April, and in Estes Park Colorado July thru September. I also perform in my own Hawaiian band called "Book 'em Danno!" when I have time in the summer. I have a degree in computer science from Colorado State University and retired from the computer industry in 2005 to spend some time expanding my music and working in the community. I'm excited to have a chance to

Chris Kennison from Ft. Collins, Colorado



Ian Ufton from Brampton, ON, Canada

remain on the HSGA Board of Directors and will work to support the mission of the organization and help it expand into the future.

Gerald Ross

I have been an HSGA member since 1998 and currently serve on the HSGA Board of Directors. I also served on the Board during the 2000-2006 term. I play Hawaiian steel guitar, guitar and 'ukulele and have released six CDs featuring Hawaiian, blues, jazz and swing music.

I feel that for the HSGA to survive we must attract new and more musically diverse members. By musically diverse, I mean steel guitarists and musicians who are not exclusively Hawaiian steel guitarists or Hawaiian-style musicians. This will accomplish many positive things. One, our current membership will be introduced to new sounds that perhaps they can incorporate into their musical palettes. Two, we can educate and expose the new members to the beauty of our music. This will accomplish our goal of promoting the Hawaiian steel guitar and its music. Three, our membership numbers will increase ensuring the longevity of HSGA and the continuity of our yearly conventions.

Ian Ufton

I currently serve on the HSGA Board of Directors. I was born in England in 1940 to the sound of Herr Hitler's bombers overhead, I was greatly relieved when my father returned from his "tour of duty" in North Africa, replacing the drone of aircraft engines with the sounds of Hawaiian music. As most of you know, the music produced by the early, great steel guitar players like Sol Ho'opi'i and Dick McIntire never leaves you. It's good music in any era and will always be good!

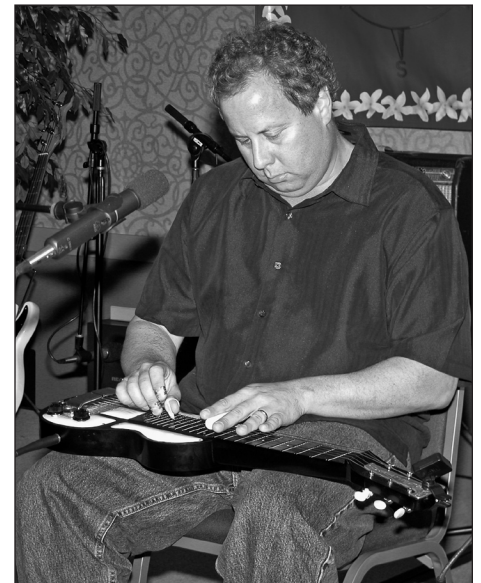
Well, along came rock 'n' roll and after mastering the steel guitar by age 11 (it's such a simple instrument), I picked up the plectrum guitar determined to dethrone Elvis at the ripe old age of 16. I got a little stupid and decided to take real guitar lessons from a member of my father's band who had played with Felix Mendelssohn's Hawaiian band.

I learned to read in the key of C, one flat and one sharp, and then figured the rest out myself (I think). Voila! I was employed as a big band guitarist.

After a somewhat volatile period as a professional musician, I emigrated to Canada in 1966. My whole family had moved there in 1965. Always with the

Continued on Page 6

Gerald Ross from Ann Arbor, Michigan



magical sounds of Sol Ho'opi'i, Dick McIntire, Jules Ah See, and Rudi Wairata in my head, I returned to the steel, built my own pedal steel guitar, and finally produced two albums in 1988 and 1993. I will have a commercial CD entitled "Beached" on the market in the next couple of months complete with a website—thanks to our webmaster Amy Pace, god love her.

Tom Tohma

I was born in 1936 in Niigata Prefecture (snow country) in Japan. I started playing 'ukulele and steel guitar during my Keio High School days. I graduated from Keio University in 1961, majoring in law and marketing. While in the textile business, I helped establish Japan branches for several American companies. I became President of the William Wrigley Jr. Company (Japan) in 1970, Director of Japan Relations at Eastman Kodak in 1976, President of Spalding Japan in 1984, and General Manager of Spalding Worldwide in 1985 covering nine countries in the Far East. I was also President of Contess Japan, a German subsidiary.

In 1979, I helped Jerry Byrd with his first steel guitar concert and joined

Tom Tohma from Tokyo, Japan



Ivan Reddington from Lakeland, Florida

HSGA on Jerry's recommendation. I served as Vice President of HSGA for the 2002-04 term.

Ivan Reddington

I currently serve on the HSGA Board. I started playing steel when I was in the fourth grade. I studied under the O'ahu system in A tuning. Later on we studied E7th and C# minor. After three courses on the steel, I took a course on the Spanish guitar and became the chord player in some groups because no one else would do it.

I had three different bands through my high school years and played for local dances and other social events in Western Nebraska.

In 1955, I started college at St. Louis University and worked on weekends with a local group that played music at Callahan's Bar in Maplewood, Missouri.

I got a degree in aeronautical engineering and a commission in the United States Air Force and went on active duty in the summer of 1958 to USAF pilot training. While in the USAF, I played music with some of my instructors and we played for veterans homes and hospitals that were nearby. While on active duty, I had little time to play music so I gave it a rest.

In 1966, I got a position as pilot for American Airlines and was assigned to Washington National Airport (now Reagan National). I met an operations clerk who played guitar so we played together for fun and company parties for a number of years. I finally discovered HSGA and have been attending conventions nearly every year since.

I have tried to promote the steel guitar at every opportunity and have tried to help others interested in learning. I hope we can prevent the death of lap steel playing and support those people willing to teach.

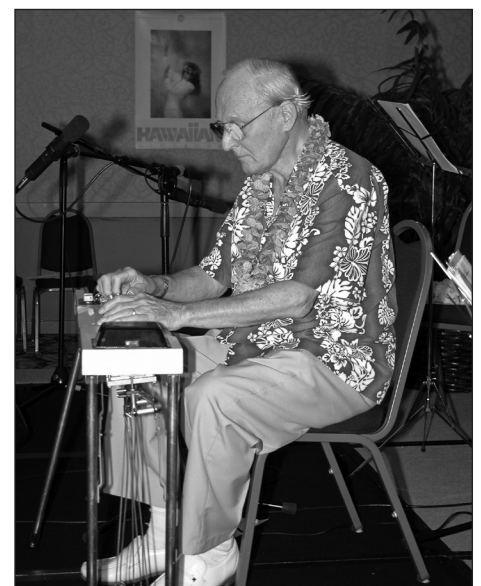
Mike Scott

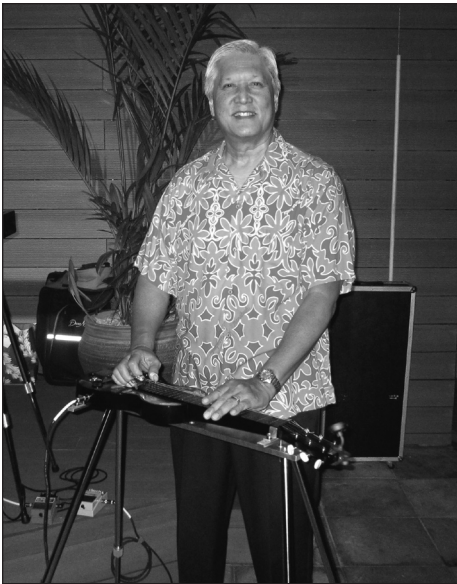
I joined HSGA in 1980 but have been playing steel guitar since 1943. I currently serve on the HSGA Board and also served as membership committee chairman during the six years that Alan Akaka served as president.

I possess one of the world's largest collections of Hawaiian recordings and have dedicated much of my time and energy promoting interest in Hawaiian music.

Prior to emigrating to Canada I had my own Hawaiian group in England from 1949 until 1954. In Canada I formed the Hawaiianaires in 1955 and it still continues to operate today.

Mike Scott from Toronto, Canada





Addison Ching from Honolulu, Hawai'i

Addison Ching

I was born and raised in Honolulu but relocated to California to attend college. Although I studied electrical engineering, I made my career in information technology and also taught college computer programming courses. I have held various positions in public and private education at all levels, and I retired several years ago from the California State University Chancellor's Office as their Director of Network Support Services. My wife and I now split our retirement between homes in California and Hawai'i.

Although I have had other musical training, I never had the opportunity to pursue the Hawaiian steel guitar until recently when I became acquainted with Alan Akaka. Learning the steel guitar is very fulfilling to me, allowing me to "give back" to my Hawaiian heritage and honor those Hawaiian legends who recorded for the 49th State Records label that was founded by my uncle, George Ching.

During my short experience with the steel guitar I have had opportunities to guest perform at several venues in California and Honolulu. In California, I've performed with Auntie Geri Kuhia and Mehana at several of their venues, and when in Honolulu I'm a regular

guest performer at the Keawe 'Ohana show at the Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort and Spa.

My interests also include computers and electronics. I develop and host websites for various clients, and I'm also a volunteer assistant at Ke Kula Mele Hawaii, Alan Akaka's School for Hawaiian Music.

With my background and experience I feel that I have much to offer the association and look forward to the opportunity of serving the HSGA Board and membership.

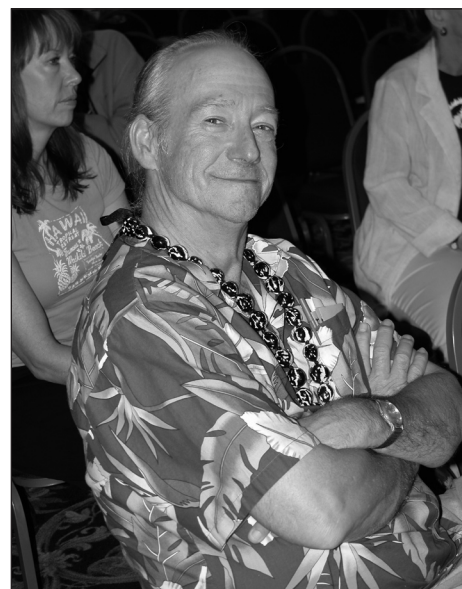
Dave Kolars

I was born at a very early age in 1945 and grew up on a farm in North Central Kansas. I graduated from Kansas State University in 1967 with a B.A. in English, moved to Northern Illinois in 1967, and have lived in the DeKalb-Sycamore area since then. I joined HSGA in 2004 and started playing steel in 2005.

My mother was a music teacher and she "let" me start piano at age 8 (I played for about 8 years). I played snare drum all through school until I started playing guitar in 1964 and then took up the dobro in about 1972.

In the early '70s, I played guitar and dobro with the Pleasant Street String

Dave Kolars from DeKalb, Illinois



Band. We performed at clubs and festivals around Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Missouri, teaming up with Vassar Clements whenever he was in the area. I've played in three or four other bands over the years, playing at local clubs as well as regional festivals.

I've worked at various jobs over the years, including grounds keeping, food service, mechanic, and running a coffeehouse-restaurant in the mid-'70s in DeKalb. During that time, I helped to start the Duck Soup Coop, a nonprofit food coop that is still thriving, and served on the Board twice in following years. I also served on the Board of Directors of the DeKalb County Lamb and Wool Producers in the mid-'80s for a three-year term. In 1995, I was one of the founders of the Northern Illinois Bluegrass Association (NIBA) and ran it for six years, published the monthly newsletter, and promoted three bluegrass festivals during that time. The NIBA is still running strong with over 450 members. I also worked with three other regional and national festival promoters as well as several other associations promoting bluegrass in a four-state area.

In 2001, I retired from Northern Illinois University, where I was a computer support specialist. I handled state bid specifications and awarded bids for the warehouse resale stock, maintained over 30 computers on three networks, and wrote programs for warehouse management.

I now play in two groups as well as solo, do woodworking, and build 'ukuleles and guitars, as well as collect, repair and sell used instruments.

I would love to see HSGA grow and share the beauty of the steel guitar. I have many years of experience serving on boards, doing promotion and publicity, as well as the knowledge and experience that comes with being both a promoter and a performer. With promotion, HSGA can grow and attract new members. I'd like to be a part of that!

Continued on Page 8

Jeff Strouse

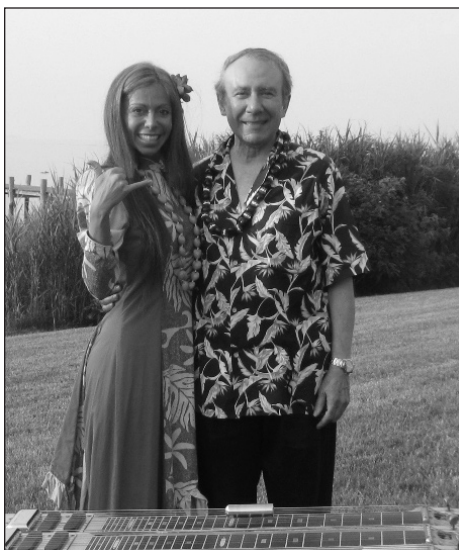
I've met many great friends through HSGA, and it would be an honor to serve on the Board. My primary goal is for the preservation and encouragement of steel guitar in all facets, especially Hawaiian music. For the past few years I've been a primary organizer for the Non-Pedal Steel Guitar Room at the Texas Steel Guitar Association's annual convention in Dallas, Texas.

Frank Della-Penna

I started on Hawaiian steel guitar in the fourth grade at the Harlin Brothers Studio in Indianapolis, and in New York City I studied with Roy Smeck. In the mid-1990s, I hosted a public radio show on Hawaiian music, culture and food.

HSGA is facing dramatic changes and I want to participate in the growth opportunities of increased interest in Hawaiian music and culture. I have ideas for reaching out to venues currently not reflected in HSGA membership—music and folklore departments at U.S. and Japanese colleges. We must leverage social media technologies to promote HSGA and Hawaiian music and culture. Both Facebook pages and

Frank Della-Penna and Nui Nani Makaha



Jeff Strouse from Jacksonville, Florida

group email lists for members are easy to establish. I will engage the media for coverage of HSGA and our events and reach out to the numerous Hawaiian State Societies across the U.S. to encourage participation.

I am an active member of both HSGA and Aloha International. I now am HSGA Recording Secretary and previously served on the HSGA Board. I am a member of HSGA's vibrant Scholarship Committee. For both organizations' newsletters, I frequently provide news articles on Hawaiian musicology and other topics, and often respond to member requests for information on music and instruments. I perform at both organizations' conventions, arranging and playing difficult pieces never heard before at conventions. I served on the Board of the Hawaii State Society, where I was on the committee that organized its first and highly successful 2009 Presidential Inaugural Ball. All these experiences as well as my federal government professional career, demonstrate strong fiscal management, organization and leadership skills.

I served as the Hawaiian steel guitarist for a *halau* (dance school) in Washington, D.C. I have performed at the U.S. Capitol and at the JFK Center and on National Public Radio, and for

leading politicians from Hawai'i and Japan. I now perform with singer and dancer Nui Nani Makaha (see photo below left) at weddings, private parties and corporate events in the regional area. Samples of my performances can be found on YouTube at: Friday Night Hawaiian Jam #3, performing "Orange Grove in California," a signature piece of Sol Ho'opi'i; and Friday Night Hawaiian Jam #5, "Blue Mahaalani Moon," an arrangement based on Steppy DeRego's recording.

I served six years in the Marine Corps in Asia and in the U.S. I now reside in Washington, D.C. with my wife, Stephanie Ortoleva, an international human rights lawyer and proud HSGA member! ■

HSGA Donations

Thanks, HSGAers for your kind donations this past couple of quarters.

Bill Rosen of Seattle, Washington contributed a generous \$120! **Tony Fourcroy** of Fort Collins, Colorado, **Jim Giles** from Lisbon, Wisconsin, and **Dee Reddington** of Escondido, California all donated \$100. Mahalo for these generous donations!

Big mahalos to everyone who contributed. The following members donated at least \$10:

- Donald R. Fullmer, Mechanicsville, VA
- Wade H. Hargrove, Raleigh, NC
- Doug Hazelberg, Kenosha, WI
- Barbara L. Hudman, Honolulu, HI
- Solomon M. L. Kam, Honolulu, HI
- Jess Montgomery, Kapa'a, HI
- E. T. Niehaus, Grove City, MN
- Wally & Peg Pfeifer, Dwight, IL
- John & Joanne Plas, Wellington, OH
- Russell & Kathi Pollock, Zanesville, OH
- L. Bogue Sandberg, Chassell, MI
- Roger Shackelton, Mukilteo, WA
- Gloria V. Umbarger & Joyce Stuart, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA
- Roger Ward, Sheffield, U.K.
- David S. Wier, Okeechobee, FL

COCO WIRE

A reminder to HSGAers, Japan Coordinator **Tom Tohma** is planning the First HSGA Japan Convention to be held on September 9 in downtown Tokyo at the old B-Flat club! More than 20 bands from all over Japan will participate. Overseas HSGA members are welcome to attend or perform. The cost is \$50 to help cover expenses. Please let Tom know by the end of July. You can reach him at: Akitomo "Tom" Tohma, 505 4-1-9 Hiroo Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 150-0012 Japan; Email: akitomo-16@miracle.ocn.ne.jp.

Some sad news from the Williams Twins, **Joanne Parker** and **Janis Crum**: "We just wanted you to know about **Eileen English**. She passed away on February 25 with her son Ron at her side. Many of us knew Eileen as the spouse of **Norman English**, who passed away in 1993. They were a great couple and we will miss Eileen very much as we have missed Norm. The last two times I went to see Eileen, she just didn't feel up to having company. She had extreme arthritis throughout her body and especially in her back and spine. She always looked so beautiful whenever you would see her. Ron asked us to play at her service. We did "Prayer is the Key to Heaven" and "In the Garden." Not an easy task! Her funeral was held on Saturday, March 3 at Gorsline Runciman Funeral Homes, 900 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing, Michigan. Condolences may be shared with the family at www.grlansing.com."

From **Wayne Shishido**: "**Doc [Isaac] Akuna** staged another Legends steel guitar show in Waikiki on May 6. Lots of good folks played in this one once again. I'm playing the Halekulani Hotel twice a week now (Friday and Saturdays). They brought in a new group without steel and we lost one of our nights. We were assured that it was nothing to do with our group—just that "Halekulani management" was looking to make a change. The music business is a fickle one! I heard that **Hiram Olsen**, **Casey Olsen** and **Bla Keohokalole** will be going to Japan with **Kano Miller** in May. It's nice to hear they're still playing."

Dutch steel guitarist **Walter Niesing** just told us that he has uploaded part of a TV show aired in The Netherlands in the 1980s featuring the Kilima Hawaiians with **Coy Pereira** on steel guitar and band founders Bill and Mary Buysman. Point your browser to youtu.be/R8qs1yBw2rM. The band

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.



Entertaining at our 2010 Joliet Convention, the popular Williams Twins, Janis Crum (left) and Joanne Parker, with Kamaka Tom.

does a quick version of "On the Beach at Waikiki" and an extended version of "Lahaina Luna" with a couple of steel solos. Coy sounds great on his frypan!

Late breaking news from **Ken Emerson** from deep in the trenches: "We had a wonderful concert with Rene and troupe here in Holland. **Lion Kobayashi** played well, also the French musicians and dancers were there, all very nice. I am off to France tomorrow to start my French tour." Java-born **Rene Ranti** and his wife Nora are well respected members of the Dutch Indonesian community and actively promote Hawaiian Music and steel guitar shows in Holland. ■

Aloha JOE®

America's Premier Hawaiian Music Station

**Aloha Joe Radio playing all
your island favorites since 1994**

Cell Phone APPS
ANDROID & I-PHONE
Listen anywhere...

www.ALOHAJOE.com

Stardust

(Carmichael – Parish)

Ballad

Arrangement by John Ely

Intro

B^bmaj7 G7 C_m7 C[#]0 D_m7 B^b7([#]5) C_m7 F¹³(b9) B^b7

strum

E C A G E C Bb

Steel Gtr. (C6th) – Ignore bottom line if you have a 6-string steel.

A

E^bmaj7 A^b7([#]11) B^b

Optional notes in parentheses

11 G7 C_m G7 C_m F7 F7([#]5)

P.H.

let ring-----|

16 B^b A7 B^b C7 C₇^{sus} C7

20

F7 Cm7 F7 B^{b+} **B** E^bmaj7 A^b7(#11)

T	5	6	7	8	7	6	5	10	9	8	6	3	10	10	9
A								10			3	3	3	5	6
B	5						5		9	8	6	3	3	3	
															(8)

25

B^b G7 Cm G7

T	8	6	6	3	8	10	10	5	10	5	3	6	3	3	5	2
A			6	3	3			5	5	5		3	3	3	5	2
B	8					10	9	10	10	7		3	3	3	5	2
																(7)

29

Cm A^b7 B^b G7

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

34

Cm7 F7 B^bmaj7 B^bmaj7

rit.

2nd order harmonic (mute at 13th fret)

T	8	6	3	3	3	8	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	17
A													6	17
B	8	3	3	3	3	8	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	17
													6	17
													6	17

Finger Harmonics (let ring)-----

Jerry Byrd's First Recordings, Part II

By Anthony Lis

This three-part article discusses the first recordings of steel guitarist/HGSA director emeritus Jerry Lester Byrd (1920-2005), made with singer-guitarist Ernie Eli Cornelison (1916-1991) in October 1940. Byrd and Cornelison (who adopted the stage name Ernie Lee) recorded eight sides during an RCA Victor field recording trip to Atlanta, the label's third from last field recording expedition. Byrd and Cornelison's recordings—made under the name the Happy Valley Boys—took place at a temporary studio assembled in rooms 104 and 106 of downtown Atlanta's Kimball House Hotel. The duo's recordings were released on Bluebird, a budget sub-label of RCA Victor.

Part I (in the Fall 2011 *HSGA Quarterly*) provided background on Byrd and Cornelison's lives up to the time of their Bluebird recordings. By age seventeen, Byrd was playing in the Jay Byrd Trio on WBLY radio in his hometown of Lima, Ohio. A strong recommendation from WBLY announcer Charles Gordon Shaw garnered Byrd an on-air audition for the "Renfro Valley Barn Dance," produced by radio entrepreneur John Lair. At the time, Lair's program was broadcast over Cincinnati radio station WLW from Memorial Hall in Dayton, Ohio, seventy-five miles south of Lima.

On the strength of Byrd's late January 1939 audition, he was offered a regular spot on the weekly broadcast of Lair's program on NBC and CBS.

When Lair moved the show to a newly created entertainment complex in the actual Renfro Valley of Kentucky in late autumn 1939, Byrd followed. In addition to playing solos and accompanying cast members during the weekly broadcasts, Byrd also worked in Lair's music library, which housed folk tunes and songs popular through the end of World War I.

Ernie Cornelison, a native of Berea, Kentucky just north of Renfro Valley, joined the show as a regular cast member by early 1940. Cornelison and Byrd quickly became friends, morphing into an "unofficial" steel guitar-acoustic guitar duo.

Byrd and Cornelison made their eight Atlanta Bluebird recordings at the Kimball House between 11 AM and 1 PM on October 9, 1940. RCA Victor's "session sheet" for the recording lists three people present: Frank B. Walker, an RCA Victor executive who helped establish the Bluebird series; Dan Hornsby, RCA Victor's Atlanta representative; and Stephen H. Sholes, whom Ernie Cornelison dubbed "the recording man" in a 1976 interview with Douglas B. Green. Sholes—who in 1945 would become the head of RCA's coun-



Atlanta's Kimball House Hotel, where Jerry Byrd and Ernie Cornelison made their October 1940 recordings as the Happy Valley Boys (from Wikimedia Commons).

try division in Nashville—supervised Cornelison's recording career during his RCA years (1947-1950). In gratitude, Cornelison named his middle son Stephen after Sholes.

In his interview with Green, Cornelison relayed that the guitar he played at the Atlanta recording session was a "little black Gibson," an acoustic, L-00 model flattop guitar that his mother helped him acquire in the early 1930s. Byrd played a Rickenbacker Electro steel guitar he had purchased from Lima steel guitarist and music teacher Ronald Dearth in the late 1930s.

Even though Byrd had acquired some experience singing harmony vocals by October 1940, he did not sing in Atlanta. As Cornelison explained to Green, "[although] at that time, [Byrd] ... could sing harmony, a good baritone, ... he didn't then because that was his first recording session and he was awful busy working on that steel [guitar] while I was trying to work out some chords."

Cornelison also relayed to Green that he recalled meeting future songwriter Boudleaux Bryant (1920-2003) at the Atlanta recording session. Bryant had recently left a position playing violin with the Atlanta Symphony to join Hank Penny's Atlanta-based Radio Cowboys. Around twenty-eight years later, Bryant would compose his *Polynesian Suite* for Jerry Byrd, which Byrd recorded in fall 1968 for the Monument label (P-18107) with orchestral accompaniment for the tracks provided by members of the Mexico City Symphony Orchestra.

Byrd and Cornelison began their Atlanta session with a cheerful rendition of "Homecoming Time in Happy Valley" (Bluebird B-8592), written by Chicago radio musician Scott Wiseman in 1932. Wiseman's song—with its references to

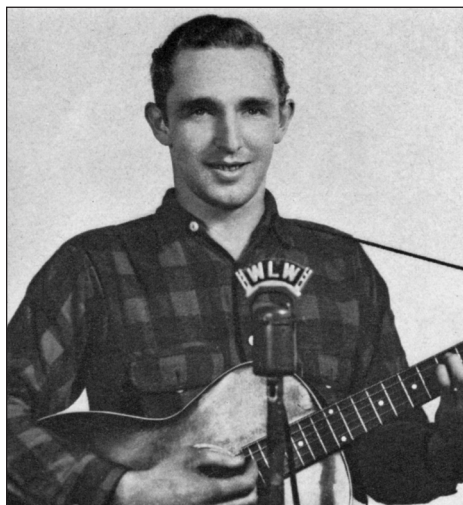
“an all-day singing and dinner on the grounds” featuring seasoned fried chicken and hickory nut cake—was evidently inspired by his boyhood memories of attending post-harvest reunions at the Pine Grove Methodist Church in Ingalls, North Carolina, northeast of Asheville.

Perhaps Byrd and Cornelison came to know Wiseman’s song through his Bluebird recording in 1933 or his 1934 recording for the Conqueror label.

On the Byrd-Cornelison cover, Byrd plays the introduction with Cornelison and supplies various fills and counter-melodies, also adding a bit of “word-painting” by playing harmonics during the lyric “church bells will chime in Happy Valley” in the first chorus.

Byrd and Cornelison—who apparently arrived in Atlanta without a duo name—earned their “Happy Valley Boys” appellation from their ebullient cover of Wiseman’s song. As Cornelison explained in his interview with Douglas B. Green, “[Bluebird recording-engineer] Steve [Sholes] liked [our rendition of ‘Homecoming Time in Happy Valley’] . . . so much that he said, ‘we’ll just call you the Happy Valley Boys.’ So they named us while we were there recording, you see.”

Ernie Cornelison during the time he was performing with Jerry Byrd on the “Renfro Valley Barn Dance.” (From the Special Collections and Archives, Berea College)



Byrd and Cornelison’s second recording was a cover of the “black dialect” minstrel show number “I’ll Never Leave Old Dixieland Again,” which RCA Victor coupled with “Homecoming Time in Happy Valley.” “I’ll Never Leave Old Dixieland Again” was written in 1882 by Thomas P. Westendorf (1848-1923), a reform school superintendent best known for the Irish-themed parlor song “I’ll Take You Home Again, Kathleen,” written seven years earlier.

Westendorf’s tune, which originally bore the now objectionable title “I’ll Nebber Leave Old Dixie Land Again,” was one of several Westendorf black dialect songs inspired by the so-called “Black Exodus” of circa 1879-1881, in which thousands of African-Americans left the post-Reconstruction South in hopes of a better life in the Midwest. Westendorf’s tune concerns a disillusioned African-American who, after enduring a harsh winter in Kansas, is eagerly returning to his wife and baby, who are waiting for him in his boyhood cabin home.

Between 1882-1884, “I’ll Nebber Leave Old Dixie Land Again” was released by at least three different Northeastern music publishers as stand-alone sheet music, as well as an entry in at least four different songbooks. At least five recordings were made of the song between 1928 and 1934, including two rather bizarre renditions waxed in August 1934 by World War I veteran turned hobo singer Goebel Reeves (1899-1959). Reeves replaced Westendorf’s black dialect with standard prose but disregarded his melody completely, rendering the song in more or less a monotone, interspersed with extremely vigorous yodeling.

In 1936, John Lair published a similarly black dialect-excised revision of “I’ll Never Leave Old Dixieland Again” in his compilation *Chimney Corner Songs*, which featured a slightly altered version of Westendorf’s original melody. Byrd and Cornelison fol-

low Lair’s text and melody nearly exactly on their recording. From this, may we conclude that their source of inspiration was Lair’s 1936 revision, which perhaps Byrd discovered during his Renfro Valley music library work?

On Byrd and Cornelison’s “I’ll Never Leave Old Dixieland” cover, Byrd plays constant fills while Cornelison provides a solid 4/4 rhythmic backing on his Gibson guitar.

Byrd and Cornelison’s third recording was a cover of a current hillbilly music hit, Lou Wayne’s “You Don’t Love Me (But I’ll Always Care)” (BB B-8703). “Lou Wayne” was the pen-name of adding machine salesman Wayne Hassell, who was working for the Monroe Calculating Machine Co. in downtown Beaumont, Texas when he composed the tune in 1939.

“You Don’t Love Me” had been recorded three times in April 1940, first on April 5 by Cliff Bruner and His Boys in Houston for Decca with Bob Dunn on steel guitar, then—ten days later—twice by Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys in Saginaw, Texas, just northwest of Fort Worth, for Vocalion with Leon McAuliffe on steel.

On Byrd and Cornelison’s cover of Hassell’s tune, Byrd accompanies Cornelison’s humming for thirty-two bars in the middle of the side, and plays a series of arpeggiated harmonics towards the end of the recording.

Byrd and Cornelison’s fourth side was a recording of Cornelison’s song “Weeping Willow Valley,” which RCA Victor coupled with “You Don’t Love Me.” Cornelison had copyrighted “Weeping Willow Valley” on August 10, 1940, a little under two months before the Atlanta recording session.

“Weeping Willow Valley” shares the same key as “I’ll Never Leave Old Dixieland Again” (C major) as well as a similar theme, a young man’s desire to return home to his family and a cherished abode. In Cornelison’s song, however, the motivation for the pro-

Continued on Page 14

tagonist's return is regret for an apparent episode of "wild oats" sowing with the sadder but wiser young man anxiously awaiting a reunion with his mother, father, and brother (as well as his faithfully waiting sweetheart) in the "little old shack" of his youth.

Byrd takes the lead during the intro, and plays a 16-bar solo consisting of an embellished version of Cornelison's melody during the first part of the second stanza. He also plays a striking series of arpeggiated harmonics at the beginning of the third stanza.

Byrd and Cornelison also recorded John Lair's "My Renfro Valley Home" (BB-8657). The song—written in Chicago in 1931—is a rather whimsical look at southern Kentucky rural life, where all is (according to Lair's lyrics) "whoop-to-looly." At the time, Lair was working as a claims adjuster at Liberty Mutual Insurance while moonlighting at Chicago's WLS radio. Lair's WLS duties included managing the Cumberland Ridge Runners, a string band that appeared on the station's "National Barn Dance" program.

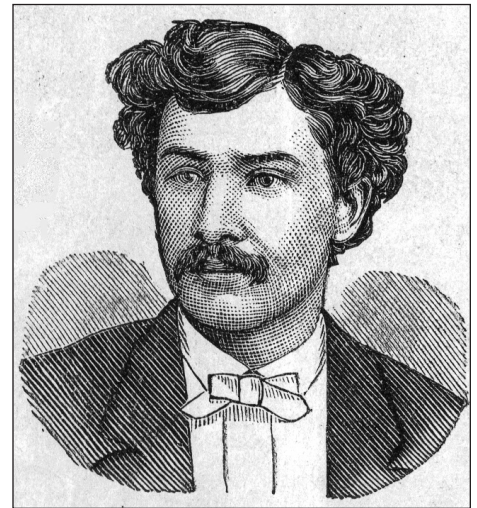
In late 1931, "My Renfro Valley Home" was recorded by Ridge Runners

Karl Davis and Hartford Taylor under the name The Renfro Valley Boys, with probably Lair on harmonica. Lair's song was subsequently covered by Stewart's Harmony Singers (1932), Riley Puckett (1934), and future "Renfro Valley Barn Dance" host Red Foley (1936), with Foley's rather jazzy rendition curiously remaining unissued.

"My Renfro Valley Home" also appeared in four songsters or songbooks published between 1935 and 1936, including Lair's own *100 WLS Barn Dance Favorites* and *Chimney Corner Songs*. Again, perhaps Byrd came across Lair's song in one of these collections while performing his music library duties.

In Byrd and Cornelison's cover of Lair's tune, Byrd shares the introduction with Cornelison and also plays a thirty-two bar break. Elsewhere, Byrd once again supplies a series of constantly changing fills and countermelodies in the upper register of his Rickenbacker Electro steel guitar.

Cornelison and Byrd recorded a second song from the later 19th Century, the black dialect nonsense song "Hop Along Peter," in an apparent arrangement by Cornelison, which RCA coupled with "My Renfro Valley



Frank Dumont, the minstrel show entertainer who composed "Hop Along Peter" in the early 1870s, from Chas. H. Duprez's *Famous Songster* [1880]. (From the collections of the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University)

Home." "Hop Along Peter" had been composed before 1875 by minstrel show performer and composer Frank Dumont (1848-1919). Meade, Spottswood, and Meade's *Country Music Sources: A Biblio-Discography of Commercially Recorded Traditional Music* shows Dumont's song appearing in eight different songsters between 1875 and 1881.

With RCA Victor's session sheet and the Bluebird record label erroneously crediting Cornelison as composer of "Hop Along Peter," it seems reasonable to infer he was the arranger on the session.

Early versions of "Hop Along Peter" were a precursor of sorts to John Fogerty's "Looking Out My Back Door," in which an inebriated Uncle Peter beholds a variety of alcohol-induced visions involving animals and insects while gazing out his window. A version of "Hop Along Peter" published in the *Happy Billy Radcliffe Songster* of the early 1880s references a skunk on the wall blowing his nose, toads in the grass wearing soldier clothes, and a duck, gander, and old grey nag playing "Rally 'Round the

(Left) John Lair's "My Renfro Valley Home," the fifth side Byrd and Cornelison recorded in Atlanta. Byrd spelled his first name as 'Gerry' until around 1942. (Right) The "Hop Along Peter" record label—the flip side of "My Renfro Valley Home"—showing the erroneous attribution of Frank Dumont's composition to Cornelison. (Courtesy of the Bob Pinson Recorded Sound Collection, Country Music Hall of Fame)



Flag” on the banjo, in addition to poker playing bugs in the attic, a dice throwing spider, etc.

In the mid-to-late 1930s, “Hop Along Peter” was recorded by the “hillbilly” acts Wade Mainer & Zeke Morris, and Fisher Hendley & His Aristocratic Pigs. By the time of these recordings, Dumont’s protagonist had devolved into a rather doddering old drunk who—setting off to Heaven on a stormy night—loses his way and winds up in the underworld (with both Mainer and Henley’s lyrics tactfully skipping over the dreaded “H-word”).

On Byrd and Cornelison’s “Hop Along Peter” cover, Byrd shares the introduction with Cornelison and plays three blues tinged solos. Cornelison wisely moves the mention of Uncle Peter’s underworld descent from the opening verse to the last verse, where the unexpected omission of the word ‘hell’ works better as a punch line.

Next, in Part III, details on Byrd and Cornelison’s last two Atlanta recordings, instrumental renditions of the *hapa haole* songs “My Little Grass Shack in Kealakekua, Hawaii” and “Sophisticated Hula.”

Ernie Cornelison’s recollections of the events leading up to his 1940 recordings with Jerry Byrd (and the recordings themselves) were taken from his February 26, 1976 interview with Douglas B. Green in Tampa, Florida, conducted as part of the Country Music Foundation’s Oral History Project (interview OH90). Recording information on Byrd and Cornelison’s Atlanta session were taken from RCA session sheet 018-0154, held by the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. ■

Please Contact Us!

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

DISC ‘N’ DATA

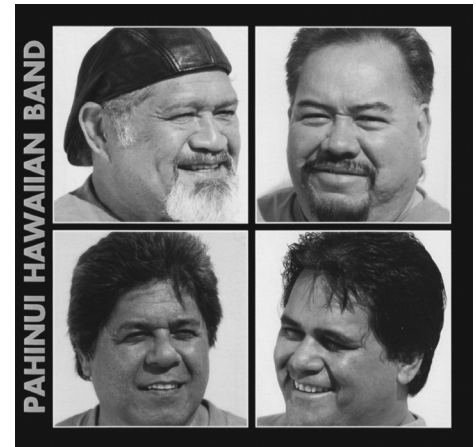
“Pahinui Hawaiian Band” – Cyril Pahinui, Greg Sardinha, Kunia Galdeira, Sonny Lim; Keala Records, SKCD-1227

Review by John Ely

Guitarist and vocalist Cyril Pahinui builds on the legacy of his father Gabby Pahinui in this recent release of Hawaiian classics from Greg Sardinha’s Keala Records label. Greg is featured on steel guitar along with Cyril’s nephew Kunia Galdeira on uke, and Sonny Lim on bass and slack key guitar.

The CD is beautifully packaged with cool photos and ample liner notes on each selection including Hawaiian language lyrics, English translation and information most outside of Hawai‘i would not know about the historical and cultural backdrop for the material. In fact, the CD is the result of recorded takes the band made while rehearsing for their annual performance at the Gabby Pahinui Waimānalo Kanikapila. The material revisits the Pahinui family traditions, part of which is lending a new flavor to the traditional backyard Hawaiian style. For example, Gabby would often use current-at-the-time pop riffs as musical bookends for a standard hula tune—it grabbed the attention of music fans young and old. The “Pahinui Hawaiian Band” CD continues and expands this technique.

Selections on the CD include: “Ka Leo O Ka Manu”; “Ahi Wela/Mele O Kaho‘olawe” with some super steel guitar from Greg; “Pauoa Ka Liko Ka Lehua” in a latin setting; “Ka Uluwehi O Ke Kai” with a very unconventional pop arrangement; “Ka Pua U‘i” with worked out parts in an almost western swing vein plus an adventurous acoustic steel solo by Greg; a haunting, straightforward rendition of “He‘eia”; a unique “Fly Me to the Moon” that starts with a soft latin feel and morphs into a sort of contemporary R&B vocal



flourish by Kunia; and some nice originals written by Cyril, “Mokulē‘ia” and “Ka ‘Āina O O‘ahu.”

After a wild ride of unique arrangements and eclectic styles, we are brought back to earth with very *nahe-nahe* backyard renditions of “Wai‘alaē” and “Lei Nani” both with interesting steel solos from Greg.

The “Pahinui Hawaiian Band” CD covers a lot of musical territory and isn’t that easy to categorize. It should appeal to both traditional and contemporary Hawaiian music fans. And it will likely make a fan out of anyone who is not that familiar with Hawaiian music. Kudos to the band for their work on this fine CD.

Members with Internet can purchase the CD directly at kealarecords.com. If you don’t have Internet access, you can place an order or address inquiries to: Keala Records, 1605 Ulupii Place, Kailua, HI 96734. Send \$15 per copy for domestic orders and \$20 for orders outside the U.S. ■

Treasurer’s Report

(as of March 31, 2012)

General Fund	\$18,722.38
Scholarship Fund	\$13,990.53
Joliet Checking	\$626.92
Japan Account	\$2,867.51
Grand Total	\$36,207.34

VINTAGE AXES

We took a break last issue from Paul Warnik's terrific *Vintage Axes* series. In fact, we're running out of topics, having covered the most popular and playable of the older instruments. We're ending the series with the unusual yet popular Eddie Alkire E-harp models. It's a complicated subject because along with the instruments came an entire system of playing that Eddie developed, centered around his advanced E-harp tuning. Here's Paul to tell you about the instruments themselves, and we'll follow with a feature about Eddie Alkire and his many innovations.

The first production model of Alkire E-harp was made by the Epiphone Company in the early post-war period, probably no later than 1948. It is considered by collectors as the rarest and most valuable of all the E-harps. Some players also consider it the best sounding in comparison to all the later models made by Valco-National.

The Epiphone model features a symmetrical guitar shaped wood body with the headstock, back, and sides painted black. The top is white with white binding around the top edge. The headstock has a Tee-shaped logo of white plastic with gold lettering. On top is the "Eddie Alkire" name (horizontally) and below is the "E-harp" name (vertically). The tuners are of the deluxe Epiphone manufactured type, which are found on the higher end Spanish archtop guitars that they manufactured during the period. They have large, squarish tuner buttons made of plastic-celluloid that vary in color from green to brown. The metal case of the tuners features the embossed, stylized "E," which was used by Epiphone as part of their name logo—it looks more like a 'C' with a slash thru it. The nut and the bridge are of aluminum and the bridge has a "strings through the body" design.

One of the most distinctive features of E-harps is the asymmetrical fret-



A pristine Epiphone-made E-harp, the most collectible model, complete with original clear Lucite hand rest, original tuners, and original tone and volume controls.

board that has almost three octaves of frets. After the first octave, the fretboard cants slightly away from the player and again slightly more after the second octave. Unlike the Valco-National models that followed, the Epiphone fretboard was made of wood with individual inlaid white plastic frets. The tone and volume controls usually have one "flipper" type knob and one small round Bakelite knob with a single point.

The pickup most commonly found is the larger sized white color with exposed pole pieces and rounded outside edges. Some—possibly the earliest models—have a similar white color pickup that is not nearly as wide and more oval shaped.

Perhaps the most problematic issue with these Epi E-harps is the hand rest. Hand rests were standard features on all models. The Epi one was made of a

clear Lucite plastic that was prone to breakage and deformities with age. Hence, many are found to be missing the half-circle shaped hand rest entirely. I have personally encountered many with hand rests that have warped and shrunk as well as turned color from clear to "funky" shades of brown and green. In my experience from years of collecting, having a pristine hand rest on the Epi is a major factor in premium price valuation.

The next production model was made by National-Valco in the early 1950s. Like the Epi, it continued to have a rather standard symmetrical guitar shape. But unlike the Epi, it did not have a painted wood finish but instead featured a grayish color "Pearloid" nitro-cellulose skin that was stretched and formed over the wood body. This stuff was used predominantly on toilet seats of the era as well as steel guitars

A very clean example of the second E-harp production model built by National-Valco with MOTS finish, the simpler logo, and the white unibody hand rest and control plate.

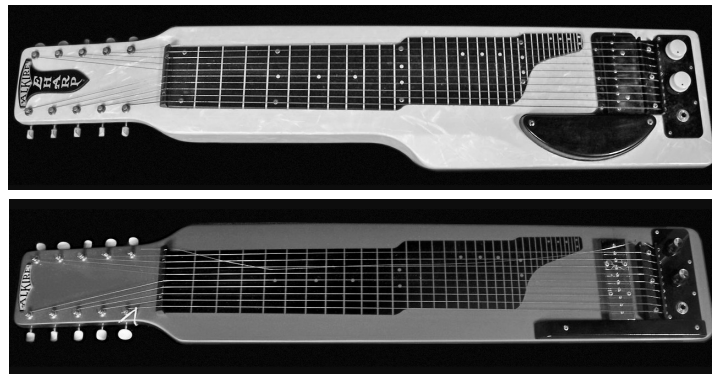


of various makers. This gave rise to the term “Mother-of-toilet-seat” as a descriptor of those guitars that had this faux mother-of-pearl covering. In fact this descriptor has become so common among guitar collectors that when describing an instrument having this finish, it is frequently abbreviated as having “M.O.T.S.” This second model and those made after would feature Kluson tuners with celluloid plastic buttons that often deteriorated and crumbled with age. The headstock logo retained its Tee shape but now was done up in white-over-black and black-over-white lettering, all covered with clear plastic — ‘Eddie’ was dropped from the logo name, which now read simply ‘Alkire E-harp’. The fretboard retained the asymmetrical shape but now was made of clear plastic with a white painted background and black painted frets. An interesting feature of this model is that the hand rest, pickup housing cover, and control panel are formed of one white plastic piece.

The third model E-harp presents a radical change in body shape. No longer having a standard symmetrical guitar shape with rounded upper and lower bouts, the new body would have an asymmetrical oblong shape that flares out slightly wider towards the player starting at the twelfth fret. This extra width towards the player’s side allows for the hand rest placement. This model also features a change from the gray “pearloid” to a yellow “marbloid” nitro-cellulose covering. To contrast with this yellow (to sometimes white) covering, the headstock logo and fretboard were now clear plastic painted black on the back with white painted lettering and frets. This is the only model of E-harp I have encountered that could be ordered with or without three adjustable legs.

Perhaps the rarest of all E-harps is the elusive double-neck. The double neck appears to be two of the previously described models joined together except that the body on the neck further from the player is much thicker. This elevates or “tiers” the top neck so that it is more comfortable to play when switching necks. This adds considerable weight, however—the double neck with four legs is quite heavy. It is my understanding that the second neck was tuned to the exact same Alkire string tuning intervals but one octave lower than was his standard. In my years experience as a collector, I have only owned one of these double necks and have only heard of one or two others in existence.

The last production model has been sometimes referred to as the “Deluxe” or “Teacher’s” model (see top of page 19). It retains the asymmetrical oblong shape of the previous model but with several changes. Gone are the nitro-cellulose coverings in favor of a natural maple wood finish. The Tee-shaped headstock logo is replaced with a smaller horizontal logo that only reads ‘Alkire’. On the front edge in script lettering is a black Bakelite “E-harp” logo. The hand rest is made of a square block of wood with a beveled end towards the head-



(Above) The third production model E-harp with asymmetric design, marbloid finish and added width on the player’s side for the hand rest. (Below) An unusual E-harp, possibly made by Harmony?

stock. Perhaps the most unique feature of this model is the fact that unlike any of its predecessor models, this one has *two* pickups! They are both chrome plated and of course now necessitate the addition of a three-way selector switch on the control panel to allow selection of either or both pickups. This final production model comes with four adjustable legs.

A Final Word on the Alkire E-harps

This writing is an attempt to educate readers on the most commonly found production models of the Alkire steels. It is known from his archives that Eddie Alkire did make or design several models that did not go beyond the “drawing board” or prototype stage. Some of the prototype instruments were given the names Superaxe, Mini-Surfer, Cruiser, Islander, and Mighty Moe. Also, I have heard that some Alkire E-harp steel guitars were made by the Harmony Instrument Manufacturing Company of Chicago. I have never encountered an Alkire instrument that could be attributed to Harmony, but we include above a photo of one that may well be such an instrument. If anyone knows details about the instrument pictured, please let us know. That said, I believe that most who attribute a particular E-harp model to the Harmony company are actually looking at a Valco-National instrument, also manufactured in Chicago. ■

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 insert).

Members, Don’t Forget to Vote!

Yes, it’s time to elect your Board of Directors for the 2012-2014 term. Regular and Associate members are allowed to vote. Just mark the ballot included with your Quarterly, sign it, and return it to our office before June 30.

The Alkire Story

By John Ely

The Alkire E-harps that Paul Warnik mentions above were generally bought by students and professionals who adhered to the Alkire method, a rigorous system Eddie developed to deliver sophisticated four-part chordal arrangements. Before we get into the method, a little biographical information on Eddie Alkire himself.

A Short Bio of Eddie Alkire

Elbern H. "Eddie" Alkire (1907-1981) was born and raised in rural West Virginia and was "bitten" with the steel guitar bug at age 13 when he first heard Hawaiian music recordings. Two years later he took his first correspondence course in steel guitar. By October 1929 at age 22, he had utilized his skills as a guitarist and musician to become a teacher and composer for Oahu Music Company after having traveled to Pittsburgh to study electrical machines as an employee of a West Virginia coal company. He became music director for the Oahu Serenaders, who performed on over 1000 coast-to-coast broadcasts for NBC and CBS that aired from Cleveland, Ohio during the first years of network radio.

During this period, he wrote hundreds of articles for steel guitar publications and quickly built up a national reputation. In 1934 he started his own company in Easton, Pennsylvania to publish music and teach the steel guitar.

The following chronology of Alkire's design efforts appeared in a November 15, 1976 article written by Donald O. Henry for the Easton, Pennsylvania newspaper *The Express*: "Alkire had come to the conclusion in the mid-1930s that the six-string guitar was too limited. In 1936, Eddie had the Martin Guitar Company make a 15-string instrument for him. By 1937, Alkire had figured out the tuning system that was later to be utilized in the 20-string



A young Eddie Alkire posing with his 10-string Rickenbacher Electro steel guitar.

guitar system he invented. But from six to 15 strings was a huge jump ... so Eddie took it in steps. In 1938, he used an eight-string guitar cast for him by [George Beauchamp of the Rickenbacher Guitar Company]. A year later, Beauchamp had cast a new neck for him and Eddie was playing the 10-string Rick Electro model was largely a result of Eddie Alkire's influence and national reputation. At the insistence of his wife Margie, Eddie rejected his idea to develop a 15-string steel guitar and "came down to earth," settling on a more realistic 10-string steel guitar for his commercial prototype.

By 1939, he had developed his 10-string E-harp steel guitar and the 10-string chromatic tuning that was the heart and soul of the Alkire system. He sold music by the reams to teach the new method. The 'E' in E-harp is pronounced like the 'ay' in the word 'day'. 'E-harp' itself is a contraction of 'Eha', which is the Hawaiian word for 'four' (in the Alkire system you use 4 picks) and the word 'Harp'. [ED: Thanks to Lorene Ruymar for this information and other details in this article from her book, *Hawaiian Steel Guitar And Its Great Hawaiian Musicians.*]

Eddie received many prestigious awards for the development of his E-harp and accompanying method. The E-harp was formally introduced in 1940 at the 38th annual convention of the American Guild of Banjoists, Mandolinists, and Guitarists, and it was there that he was awarded the Fred Gretsch trophy and voted the nation's foremost Hawaiian guitarist. In 1961 he became the sixth winner of the American Guild of Musicians' achievement award for his contribution to the Hawaiian guitar. Using his system he was able to make faithful arrangements of very sophisticated material including popular adaptations of Tchaikowsky's piano concerto and sixth symphony.

In 1967, Alkire discontinued forty years of public appearances to do serious work on his ultimate project, the "Superaxe," which Paul Warnik referred to in his Vintage Axes article. It was a 20-string steel guitar, which he developed at his house on North Second Street in Easton. The tuning was a combination of diatonic and chromatic notes, and the problem was how to arrange them for ease of fingering for the greatest variety of chords. Over a period of years, his pile of design worksheets grew along with piles of transistors, plugs, wires and tubes. Somewhere around the middle of 1972, the first Superaxe was born requiring some 196 solder joints. Eddie debuted his Superaxe at the national convention of the Musicians Guild in that same year. It's interesting to note that Eddie had no desire to produce his tour de force commercially despite the years of blood and sweat that went into its creation.

Eddie Alkire was inducted into the Steel Guitar Hall of Fame in 1983.

Alkire System Overview

The centerpiece of the Alkire system is the Alkire 10-string E-harp tuning, which is build not on a simple strum chord, but on an E major scale with a couple of chromatic tones inserted. This is the tuning from low to high:

C#-E-F#-G-G#-A-B-C#-E. It spans little more than an octave, very unusual for a 10-string tuning, but affords a huge number of chord colors from the '40s and '50s pop-jazz palette.

To deliver chordal arrangements in the Alkire vein, you have to use a third finger pick to grab 4-note chord “shapes.” The tuning is unforgiving in that you have to perfectly execute the prescribed chord grip or disaster results. Otherwise put, you cannot “strum” this tuning—it would be like slamming your hand on a row of piano keys! On the up side, perfectly executing a sequence of four-note chords under the Alkire method gives you a phrase comparable to a George Shearing fully-voiced melody, a rare feat for a steel guitar without pedals.

From everything I have heard, the late Claude Brownell may have been the most accomplished player in the Alkire style. Sadly, I have been unable to obtain samples of his playing. If anyone in the club knows of any, please bring it to our attention. I have heard clips of Eddie’s playing, which gives you a clear idea of what is possible. And late last year, new member Ron Kempke emailed me a clip of himself playing “I’ll Be Home For Christmas,” and it captures the Alkire sound quite well. Just go to YouTube and search under ‘Alkire E-harp’.

There is a huge source of material on Eddie and his career and published work archived at the University of Illinois. This proved difficult for us to access from afar, but if you persevere, I’m sure you will be rewarded. To access the archives website, just Google ‘Alkire Personal Papers and Music Instrument Collection’ and click on the first Illinois library link you see in the results.

I’m sure music forces in the ‘60s conspired against Eddie Alkire during the time when he was working on his 20-string Superaxe. Melody and harmony were giving way to rhythm-

A beautiful shot of Art Lang and wife Mae playing her E-harp.



E-harp ace Claude Brownell playing a “Teacher’s” model E-harp at Joliet 2007 with Virginia Grzadzinski and Art Lang on backup.

based pop music. Despite its complexity and esoteric nature, however, the E-harp continues to have its proponents. Here are some interesting observations from two of them, popular Joliet regular Mae Lang and Ron Kempke.

From Member Mae Lang

My guitar lessons began in or around 1939 on a little 6-string acoustic steel guitar, which my mom and dad bought at Sears & Roebuck for \$3.95. I began with the A major tuning. My first lesson was “Nearer My God To Thee” written in tab for the A low-bass tuning. My teacher began teaching her students notation after a few lessons. She always had band practice for her students and that is where I met my future husband, Art. Art was also learning what we called Hawaiian guitar.

After a year of lessons, my band friends were getting electric guitars. I much preferred a dobro so that is what my folks bought me. I learned E tuning and C# minor on the dobro. My next guitar was an electric 6-string Supro, a less expensive model manufactured by National.

My guitar teacher had more students than she had time to teach, so she gave me some students. Meantime, Art had been asked to teach steel guitar at a chain of music stores in Detroit. When Art went into the Navy, I was hired to teach his students. My employer had a franchise on the Alkire system and wanted me to use that method exclusively. My problem was that the harmony was awkward to play in the tunings I knew.

When Art came home from service and after we were married, we visited some of my relatives in Pennsylvania. While there, we decided to visit Eddie Alkire in Easton. We expected to find a music store or studio but found a private

Continued on Page 20

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 AND PAT BARTLETT, 146 Bridwell Road, Woodruff, SC 29388
STEFAN BRUSKY, 1021 180th Avenue, Union Grove, WI 53182-9429
CHUCK CHRISTENSEN, 20W561 Diversey, Addison, IL 60101
RALPH CZITROM, 309 Lakeview Ave, Ringwood, NJ 07456
EDWARD C. FRADY, 2552 A Palolo Place, Honolulu, HI 96816
HAWAIIAN PACIFIC RADIO, 856 West Shannon Street, Chandler, AZ 85225
DEBBIE L. HENEY, 1303 NW 11th Street, Battle Ground, WA 98604
KEVIN SATO, 28131 Ridgethorpe Ct, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275
JOHN TROUTMAN, 223 Beverly Dr., Lafayette, LA 70503

CANADA & OVERSEAS

PAUL OKUBO, 4-20-1 Sendagi, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, 113-0022 Japan
ROBERT PADWICK AND BURDENA SHEA, 7925 Kaymar Drive, Burnaby, BC
V5J 3N2 Canada
JORN RAKNES, Nedre Prinsdalsvei 50, Oslo, 1263 Norway

ALKIRE STORY Continued from Page 19

home. I knocked on the door and Mrs. Alkire, a gracious lady, invited us in. Eddie Alkire demonstrated the E-harp. I ordered one, an Epiphone, and it was delivered in January 1950.

I never heard of an E-harp teacher nor any other E-harp players in the Detroit area. I am self-taught, I do not use the third finger pick and I do not play block chords typically used by most E-harp players. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to recognize my guitar as an E-harp. For many years, I really didn't think in E-harp tuning. I did use it to play the A, E and C# minor tunings, which, of course, are all contained within the Alkire tuning.

From Ron Kempke

I took E-harp lessons in the Alkire tuning from Ray Gaitsch in the early to mid-'60s. Ray was co-owner with Elmer Herrick of El-Rey Music. They had two stores, one in Chicago and the other in Chicago suburb Arlington Heights. Ray's son, Dave, was a classmate throughout grammar school and I frequently visited him at his home, where Ray gave me E-harp lessons.

Later I worked at the Arlington store with Dave on Saturdays, and it was through our association that we formed a combo while in high school. Dave played lead, I played bass, and two other members played rhythm and drums. Dave's brother Bruce filled in on rhythm at times—Bruce is now a recording artist living in Nashville, Tennessee. We played at high school dances and even battled the Shadows of Knight in a mall parking lot. The battle was hosted by WLS personality Dex Card. I sold my E-harp in 1970 while at college.

A little over a year ago, I heard Basil Henriques play Hawaiian on his Fender Stringmaster, and I immediately wanted to play E-harp again. E-harps are rare so I contacted Bruce and I asked if he had kept his dad's. Bruce said yes, and he was going to keep it, but he'd look for one for me. He found one in a music shop in Rochester, New York and, to make a long story short, when I opened the case, it was *my* E-harp! I knew that from the small dent I had made when I had dropped the steel on it while practicing my lessons.

To top it off, I live in the same town as Eddie Alkire's son, Richard, and he has provided me with copies of the

Alkire lesson system, through which I am slowly retracing my steps. I've a long way to go but I enjoy playing and learning. I make up arrangements in my head, I find chords to embellish them, and then I memorize them. Someday I hope to be able to sight read music again so I don't have to memorize everything I play. ■

TROUBADOURS Continued from Page 3

and had everyone exclaiming, "Where did he come from?" EKK is full of surprises. "Hanohano Hanalei" took us to the opposite end of Kaua'i and "Paniolo Country," made famous by Melveen Leed, brought us to Moloka'i where paniolo history runs deep.

Other Freitas originals the group shared included "Local Folks," "Standing in the Ua" ('ua' means rain), the EKK song "Sing Hawaiian Sing," "Pineapple Road" and "Swept Away" (about the Hilo tidal wave). Everyone on Kaua'i can relate to these songs during these weeks of relentless rains.

All too soon, it was time to say adios and Gordon just had to sing the song for which he is well known. "Hawaiian Cowboy" started at a fast speed and amped up verse after verse to fast, faster, fastest, and everyone who learned to yodel had their chance to join in. It's really not as hard as it sounds—if you do a slow yodel—but Gordon is really the one who can yodel up a storm and bring the cattle safely home.

I want to tip my cowgirl hat off to Gordon for being a true ambassador of music sharing his music from the heart. Write, Gorgon, write ... you have such an ability to capture island life and have so much more to share!

Thanks to Carol Yotsuda for permission to excerpt from her article. To access Carol's EKK newsletters and see what the Garden Island Arts Council has to offer, please go to www.gardenislandarts.org. There's a lot going on in Kaua'i these days! ■