# HSGA QUARTERLY

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An "all-Hawaiian" lineup on the Joliet Convention stage. (l. to r.) Guest Artist Isaac "Doc" Akuna, Duke Kaleolani Ching, President Kamaka Tom, and Wayne Shishido. Wow!

# **Joliet 2007 Convention Report**

By Lorene Ruymar

I'm sure you all knew that we were celebrating our 20th Joliet convention. Our very first HSGA convention was in St. Louis in September 1986.

OK, here it is. The major news story of the year, with all scenes of nudity and coarse language removed.

My general impression: Attendance was about the same as usual, with some of the dear old timers and strong club supporters absent, but in their place were lots of new faces, younger and amazingly great players. Looks like HSGA has a good, long future.

The weather was nippy but no rain. That made running across the highway to the Bob Evans restaurant for lunch a good way to get the old muscles tuned up. For those who didn't run fast enough, the town of Joliet supplied flower arrangements and crosses at the "point of departure."

### Thursday, October 11

Let's see now...Who played in the morning? We always begin with an opening ceremony led by and organized by Duke Ching. Joining Duke on the bandstand were Gerald Ross, Guest Artist Isaac Akuna, Kamaka Tom, and Wayne Shishido. They were great! What a way to start the convention.

On the program: Kamaka was supposed to lead off, but the opening had taken too long, so he did the generous

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## **HSGA QUARTERLY**

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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 can also be emailed directly to the editor at johnely@hawaiiansteel.com. Photos are welcome and will be returned on request. Quality original prints or high resolution digital camera output, please. *Mahalo!* 

JOLIET 2007 Continued from Page 1

thing. Jeff Strouse played a little western swing, same as Ernie and Helen Coker. Those old western swing tunes go so well on the steel guitar! Helen plays a nifty backup guitar.

Next came Don Keene, all set up on stage and ready to start when the nasty 'Gremlins of the North' disconnected something inside his steel guitar, and it was a no-go. Gene McGowan was next; showed Don how a good guitar behaves. Followed by John Nickless playing pedal steel guitar with recorded backup. Good show! But he did confide to us that he's thinking of getting back to the no-carry-big-contraption simple steel guitar like the rest of us are playing.

After our sprint home from Bob Evans, John Plas began the afternoon show, followed by Mae and Art Lang. She plays the Alkire method steel guitar with Art on backup. Then we heard Charles Buttner, Ron Scheidler, and Don Keene who did his show with all the gremlins "screw-drivered" out of his steel guitar. Last four items of the day: Chris Kennison, Lorene Ruymar with 'hubby' Art on backup, Dave

Giegerich, and Isaac Akuna. Chris and Dave are two hot players of the younger generation—anyone under 60 is "younger"—and Isaac is always fabulous on stage both as a singer and a steel guitarist. His wife, Gloria, danced a lovely hula for us.

The evening is the best part of our Joliet conventions, don't you think? WellIlll, maybe.

I still remember the days when we had all three meals and even had fun in the bar, all at that hotel and there was great socializing and music jamming. Now the restaurant is too slow for all of us to be served for breakfast or dinner and they close at lunch time. I've written them a Mrs. Buttinsky letter to see if they can't bring back the old style of service. It's money in their pockets if they can do it.

## **Thursday Evening Seminars**

OK, back to my story. What was the scheduled entertainment after dinner at the Rah Ten Oyster? Well, a-hem! It was none other than this old school marm lecturing on the history of HSGA. I'm good at looking backward, so I told all the choice tidbits that we didn't dare print in the newsletter article

At the Saturday Night Lūʻau, Alkire method exponent Mae Lang and husband Art, one of our favorite guitar players, pictured here with Florida member Rick Alexander.





Ron Scheidler from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania plays a cool-looking steel guitar with Virginia Grzadzinski and Art Lang on backup.

last year. I never know what I think until I hear what I say. Art said I was loud enough. What else matters? I just told them all I know... and then some!

Then Chris Kennison took over and brought some good sense into the meeting. He gave a seminar at beginner level on how to play the steel guitar. Kay Das picked up on the subject on the second night, and took it to the next level. We do appreciate the work of these two gentlemen and I noticed that even those who *can* play stayed glued to their chairs to hear their favorite subject discussed.

I hear gleeful stories about the jamming that goes on into the night and bumping up to daybreak. Apparently the keen younger players gather in different rooms of the hotel to jam, and many say they learn more that way than they ever did in music school. So it's not for the faint at heart; you've gotta grab your guitar and your courage and plunge in. This is all hearsay to me, because we of the older but wiser (?) group headed for the sack.

### Friday, October 12

Friday started at 7 AM with the Board meeting. How do they do it? Jam all night and turn up smart and early for the meeting. Anyway, with no time in between meetings, President Kamaka Tom began the 9 AM general meeting with an introduction of the Board members. Our Treasurer Don Weber reported that we are in excellent shape financially.

The great discussion at the general meeting had to do with a by-laws amendment, which was finally voted on and approved by the membership. Rather than go into long detail about it, I'll just refer you to our website www.hsga.org where Gerald Ross has put on display the new approved by-laws. Please download and print a copy, and send a copy to anyone you know who does not have internet access.

We ran out of time, so the Scholarship Fund report was never given but I can tell you now that we have a new student who will receive financing from us. The amount is not decided yet. Her name is Jade Louie and she's a Hawaiian who is studying ethnomusicology at the University of Hawai'i. They are teaching her slack key guitar, 'ukulele, and other instruments. Apparently there is nobody on the U.H. staff who can teach steel guitar, so she has been learning from her uncle Ronald Kanahele who is sharing with her the secret tuning of the Rogers family, which produced three of Hawaii's greatest steel players. It is Jade's ambition to become a music teacher after graduation and make the teaching of steel guitar her first priority. We all met her at this year's Hawaiian convention. She stepped up on our stage and played her steel guitar very nicely for us.

Dave Kolars was first on the program playing a wooden acoustic steel guitar. I'm always so glad when someone reminds us that the old style had tone quality and simplicity compared to the 8- and 10-string electric instruments we now play. You've heard that the 'ukulele is enjoying a great comeback in popularity because you can get a lot of music out of a simple little low-priced instrument like that. Well, it's my guess that the steel guitar will enjoy a comeback, too, but as a simple 6-string acoustic guitar.

Next came Harry Dietrich who played Malagueña on a 6-string acoustic guitar. It was impressive! He is using a G major tuning with the first string tuned to a G.

Next players: Ivan Reddington, then Wayne Shishido who is also a great singer. Did I tell you Wayne and Brenda flew from Hawai'i to be with us in Joliet for the first time? Several years back they and Isaac Akuna were doing all the heavy work of running this club, including writing for the

Continued on Page 4

Dave Kolars from DeKalb, Illinois playing acoustic steel guitar with 'da Prez', Kamaka Tom, bangin' out a bass line.



newsletter. We owe them huge thanks! It's so good that they finally got to see what goes on in Joliet.

Frank and Donna Miller closed the morning show. Donna is not only beautiful but she sings in a warm, sexy voice that Hollywood would have grabbed had they known about her. Frank just wouldn't answer the door every time they knocked. He does play a fine steel guitar backup for his lady, and plays his solo tunes with the best of them while Donna plays 'ukulele backup.

After lunch, Ron Wenger played for us, and his wife Arlene did backup on rhythm guitar. Then Bernice Honold's Coral Islanders took over. Her son-in-law Dick Martiny plays excellent rhythm guitar, and Bernice has to be our 'Queen of the Steel Guitar'. A dear friend of theirs, Jim Bungard, who played steel guitar long ago, did some pretty bouncy *ipu* (native drum) slapping, and then because of encouragement from the group, he played his steel guitar!! First time on stage after many years of silence.

I heard it from a little bird that Jim is 86 years old and that when they were little kids, Bernice and her dear departed Dick, Virginia Grzadzinski, and Jim were buddies and took music lessons together.

Last of the morning was Mike "Malihini" Scott, a man with a long history in show biz and still able to play with the best. Time to run across the highway for lunch.

Dave Kitchen started the show in the afternoon. We hadn't heard him play in several years, so it was an extra treat. Then Duke Kaleolani Ching, who is our master of all events musical, had a chance to show what *he* can do. Followed by Art Ruymar with his dear wife (me) playing backup guitar, and Terry Miller who is master of so many instruments. He's

Goshen, Indiana member Ron Wenger showing his stuff with wife Arlene on rhythm guitar. Snappy lookin' duo!





A super shot of Wayne and Brenda Shishido, erstwhile bulwarks of the HSGA Hawai'i operation, at their first Joliet convention.

amazing. He played the "Pidgin English Hula" all in harmonics. I hope I got that right, Terry??

Last of all, our special guest Isaac Akuna did as fine a set on steel guitar as you'll hear anywhere in Hawai'i along with vocals that would inspire the canaries to sing had there been any around.

### Friday Evening Seminars

First, the mad scramble to cars and off to the Hu Flung Dung for a fine repast. They do have good restaurants in that town. We got back in time to catch the last half of Isaac's talk story. I wish we had heard all of it. He's a very interesting speaker. Good humor, clear voice. I know how he developed that skill. He's a dentist. All day long—once he got someone into *the chair*—Isaac would put both hands and one knee into the guy's mouth and then proceed to talk and talk and talk, and then say, "Fi' dollahs, please."

The second speaker of the evening was Kay Das doing the advanced steel guitar seminar. Then the jamming started up. Someone told me the local pokey-meisters came with badges and night sticks and all, to tell some of the keenest jammers to cool it. I can't imagine that. It stands to reason that every guest in that hotel would prefer to listen to three different rooms of jammers going full tilt, rather than do a boring sleep. So, I do not believe the story is true.

### Saturday, October 13

How the time flies! Rick Aiello did a fine show, followed by Kay Koster and singer Sharon Angelo. Kay always has a good joke to tell. She asked me to play guitar backup but I couldn't find a guitar to borrow, so I told her I'd just sit there and play air guitar. She liked the idea, but Dick Martiny spoiled it all by handing me a guitar to play. Oh well, next

time... Then Frank Della-Penna. So nice to see him back again. He's retired now. Then Isaac Akuna did his show, followed by Dick Lloyd who is famous for his superb "touch and tone," then Don Woods, and Gerald Ross, our webmaster and great natural musician who plays everything.

After we went on the chase for lunch, here's how the final hours of our program went: First, long-timer Don Fullmer on stage playing steel guitar duets with a new comer, Carol Hidy, who has an interesting music career that we must tell you about in the next issue. Plus Noel Tardy, a big name in the 'ukulele world, and Andy Barlo on uke. Kay Das followed, then Doug Smith, another master of the 6-string acoustic, and Rick Alexander. Then, at 3 PM we had to quit so the staff and entertainers could prepare the hall for our big lū'au windup.

What to do with those hours up to 5:00 when the doors would open again? Kay Das had the solution. He had a quiz prepared for our savvy longtime steel guitar fanatics. His game had 15 questions in which the players had to identify the steel guitarists by listening to short 20-second excerpts from 15 different recordings. After listening and guessing, the score sheets were turned in. Frank Della Penna came second!!! Cheers, everybody. And now for the first place champion—none other than Mike "Malihini" Scott!!! Aside from all your cheers, Mike won one priceless CD produced by Kay Das. Good stuff, guys! Thanks, Kay.

### The Lū'au Show

At 5 PM the doors opened to the steel guitar stylings of a number of our top players: Chris Kennison, Terry Miller, Frank and Donna Miller. Who else??

Then the show began, fabulous as usual, with guests from the town of Joliet to enjoy it with us. Our favorite hula

Frank-Della Penna (left) and Mike Malihini Scott in a "frypan dual" with "seconds" Gerald Ross (center) and Isaac Akuna.





Ohio member Carol Hidy and steel guitar duet partner, Don Fullmer, from the Richmond, Virginia area.

dancer, Gloria Murawsky Akuna, brought five dancers with her from Milwaukee and our dear Leigh Bell joined with them beautifully.

President Kamaka danced and chanted for us in proper male hula costume with green grass skirt and *lei po'o*. So many people commented on it, I asked him to give us the story. "The first *'oli* or chant that I performed, 'Kunihi Ka Mauna', was an *'oli komo* or entrance chant. The second was an *'oli aloha*, 'Onaona Ka Hala', appropriate for greeting and welcoming visitors and kinfolk alike. The third number was "Kawika," a hula and chant that honors Kind David Kalākaua, regent of Hawai'i, the first monarch to circumnavigate the world in 1881." *Hana hou*, Kamaka.

'Paniolo' Doug Smith wow'd the audience with his superb roping tricks, and Dr. Gilbert O'Gawa sang his humorous old-tyme songs that we love so well. I should name each musician who took part in the singing and instrumentals of that show, but I'm afraid to do so for fear of forgetting someone. They were all so talented, top-professional level. It made me so proud and happy to know that the work of promoting the steel guitar is being done by them every time they set foot on a stage, here or in Hawai'i.

We all stood and joined hands to sing "Hawai'i Aloha" to close the show. There was lots of hugging going on as we sadly left the room to go pack for tomorrow's travel.

I know I've worn your eyeballs out with all this talk, but old school teachers never die, they just talk everyone else to death. I just want to remember all the dear members who couldn't make it to Joliet this year and again I don't dare name them because I'll forget to list someone. But I *can* tell you what a joy it was to see Vern Cornwall again. He has been absent because of ill health. He could only stay for the

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afternoon, but we did talk – big time. We all missed Alma Pfeifer so much; thankfully, Donna Miller had help at the desk from Barbara Kuhns and Elaine Barlo.

Our new sound techs, Fred Campeau and Paul Watkins, were right on the job doing stage management and keeping our sound balanced. Many thanks. And huge thanks to Doug Smith, Barbara Kuhns, and Floyd Alexander for the many years they did the job for us.

A few more points to clear up: What happened to the William Cheorvas collection? He left it to us in his will. His huge collection of items connected to sound reproduction. Do you want me to start naming them? Like speakers, audio players, etc. They were shipped to Ron and Nancy Simpson's home where they were stored until they could be brought to Joliet for sale. People just took what they wanted and put a donation into the box.

We had some concern about what to do with all the leftovers, but John Hatton, the owner of Cleff'd Ear Productions who sets up his shop at the far end of our convention hall, had invited his friend John Shewmaker to come along to hear our music and it just happened that Shewmaker had applied for a radio license to run an NPR (National Public Radio) station in Ludington, Michigan. A lot of the equipment, though dated, would fit well in the station as startup hardware. As John Hatton put it, "He got a good deal, we got a donation, and the Cheorvas collection of stereo gear has a new home."

I also had John promise that traditional Hawaiian music with steel guitars would be played on a regular basis, at least





Ably filling some pretty big shoes, Chicago musician and new HSGA sound man Fred Campeau from Chicago.

weekly, on the station. He agreed and would love it if HSGA members with recordings would consider donating some of them to start up his station library. Contact John at: http://ssasy.us/ or cleffd\_ear@yahoo.com. Mahalo!

To sum up the Cheorvas collection story, our members took what they wanted and donated a total of \$226; then John Shewmaker arrived on Friday and took all the remaining items for a donation of \$200. HSGA says, "Thank you very much!" to all of you. Especially to Ron and Nancy Simpson for all the lugging and storing they did, and most of all to William Cheorvas, an HSGA member for many years, a military man, master of the tango, and generous donor of his whole collection of music equipment. We salute you, William.

John Hatton went on to tell us more about our new sound system team. "The issue of running sound using local area talent was really just a contact or two away—in short, the best non-electric recording ears in the area. They are both very good friends of mine, and I work with them often on various projects throughout the year. I also play music with Fred Campeau when he is not being a surveyor. Paul Watkins is also involved with the University of Chicago Folk Festival and might be interested in a Hawaiian steel presentation with dancers some day." Thank you, John Hatton! I hope you made many sales at the Joliet convention. You were the quiet worker behind the scenes for HSGA.

## Members, Don't Forget to Vote!

Yes, it's time to elect your Board of Directors for the 2008-2010 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 March 15.

## DISC 'N' DATA

## "Hawai'i's Falsetto Poet" – Bill Ali'iloa Lincoln (Hanaola HOCD-98000)

Review by John Ely

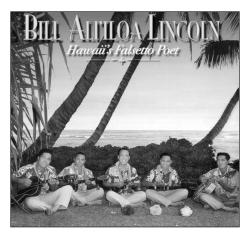
Michael Cord has once again produced a real gem in "Hawai'i's Falsetto Poet." Bill Lincoln was known for his chilling falsetto, inspired by George Ka'inapau and Lena Machado, and also for his terrific Hawaiian language compositions of which many are indispensable standards to this day. He was the first recorded artist on the Bell label.

The tracks are clear and dripping with feeling—most were recorded in the '40s and '50s including some early Bell releases. The upright bass clearly pounds out the rhythm—you don't often hear it this well. Overall, the CD has the authentic feeling of a folk "field" recording coupled with superb musicianship, a rare combination.

The steel playing is just great—Walter Wailehua for the most part, I believe. It's a good example of a transitional style, with that '30s-style heavier vibrato but with a lot of freedom of melody and chord work you don't hear until much later. You can hear that occasional musical irregularity you'd never find on a more commercial CD, but it only adds to the spell Bill and his band weave. If you want to practice vamps and enlarge your vocabulary of backup tricks this is the ticket!

The CD closes with three much more recent Bill Lincoln tracks. Eddie Pang plays steel guitar on "The Magic Islands" and none other than Jerry Byrd, at the height of his powers, burns on "Na Ka Pueo" and plays a sweet "Moku O Keawe."

Other songs on the CD include "Ku'u Lei Liliha" (two versions), a gorgeous of "Pua Be Still," "Ka wai o 'Eleile," "Ku'u Milimili," "Ke Ana Kolu," "Nani Lawai," "Pua Iliahi," "Kawaihae," "My Yellow Ginger Lei,"



"Mauna Lahilahi," "Kaipolani," "Poli Anuanu," "Halema'uma'u," "Pa'ahana Hula," and "Pualeialoha."

If you're a Bill Lincoln fan, you'll be impressed with the job the restoration team at Hanaola Records did. If you're not familiar with Bill Lincoln, get ready for deep immersion in "back-yard" Hawaiian soul, complete with lilting hula vocal and classic steel guitar accompaniment.

The liner notes and photos are superb, in keeping with the Cord standard. Kudos to Michael Cord, Harry B. Soria, and the whole team.

## "Lure of the Islands" – The Harmony Hawaiians (Cumquat COCD-2805)

Review by John Ely

"Lure of the Islands" completes Bruce Clarke's set of the Harmony Hawaiians radio transcriptions and represents the final period when Dick McIntire had to be replaced due to failing health.

On this CD you can hear three different steel guitarists—Eddie Bush, Ernest Tavares, and his brother Freddie. This is swingin' *hapa haole* all the way with lots of jazzy steel guitar and elaborate vocal arrangements.

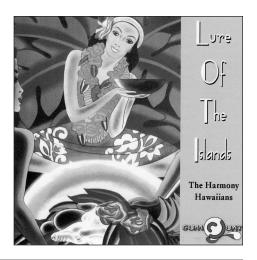
Eddie Bush plays beautifully and is featured on half of the CDs 20 tracks. You'll want to compare his version of "Hilo March" to the classic versions of this tune. Eddie and the singers really

shine on a beautifully arranged "Mauna Kea." This band's version of "Hawaiian War Chant" is superb, especially the hard swingin' vocal arrangement. Eddie does a nice instrumental version of "Waikapu"; the Dick McIntire influence is unmistakable. Other tracks that feature Eddie Bush include "King's Serenade," "Wailana," "Dreaming in the Moonlight," and "My Isle of Golden Dreams."

Ernest Tavares is featured on six tracks. I wasn't that familiar with his playing. He's cool! He really swings on "Beauty Hula," ripping off lots of big chords. Same for "My Hawaiian Queen" and "Minnehaha." It really sounds like he's using an A6th with a couple of pedals. Dig his chord work on the band's vocal version of "Waikapu." Got to be a pedal steel! Ernest plays "Ke Ka Upu" with an almost orchestral delivery. "Ua Like No A Like" and "Kaua Ika Huahuahai" are quirky but historically interesting.

On "Hawaiian Lullaby" Freddie joins his brother Ernest for a lush steel guitar duet. Then it's all Freddie on the last two tracks, "I Found A Little Grass Skirt" and last but not least, Freddie's incomparable steel guitar composition, "Kewalo Chimes," alone worth the price of the CD. Lovely.

The CD sounds great. There are only a couple of spots where Bruce had to really do some serious surgery on some imperfections in the masters. Highly recommended if you're a Harmony Hawaiians fan. Duh!



# A History of Hawaiian Music and Steel Guitar in Japan

By Tom Ikehata Tohma

I have reported to HSGA members that there are many Hawaiian steel guitar players all over Japan, which any Honolulu Convention goer will attest to—one Japanese player after another on our convention stage! The players I am familiar with, I'm sure represent only a fraction of the steel player population of Japan. Although they are largely in their sixties and seventies, their playing technique is excellent. Most learned during the resurgence of Hawaiian music in Japan following the Second World War, a kind of revival of the original "Hawaiian music boom" which began in the late '20s and lasted into the early '40s. College students in the '50s and '60s also started up Hawaiian bands, and they performed at popular music concerts, dance parties, radio programs, music clubs and even on TV shows. At Keio University, the Hawaiian music club had over one hundred members and ten bands. I played steel guitar and was leader of one of those bands, the Kalua Islanders.

The first performance of Hawaiian music by native Hawaiians in Japan was held at Tokyo Expo in 1914 and featured Helen Mokela and her Hawaiian group.

In 1925, Tokyo radio station NHK began operations and did much to help raise awareness and increase the popularity of Hawaiian music in Japan. (The first station to broadcast over the radio airwaves was Pittsburgh station KDKA in 1920. Then France followed in 1921, England in 1922, and Germany in 1923.)

Tom Tohma playing a Teisco 6-string lap steel with his college Hawaiian band, the Kalua Islanders, on a 1960 television set.





Tom Tohma at his steel guitar with Tatsuo "Tony" Otsuka in 1979.

In 1927, Ernest K. Kaai and his group from Hawai'i performed in Tokyo. He stayed on and became Japan's first Hawaiian music instructor. He left Japan a few years later, but left a lasting impression.

In late 1928, Madame Riviere's Hawaiians performed in Tokyo and other cities throughout Japan. Tau and Rose Moe, both 20 years old at the time, were in this troupe. Their oldest son Lani was born at the Kyoto Furitsu Hospital in 1929 while on tour in Kyoto.

In 1929, second-generation Japanese-Hawaiians, Yukihiko Haida and his younger brother Katsuhiko, put together the first Hawaiian music band in Japan, the Moana Glee Club. Yukihiko was featured on acoustic steel guitar, and the group made many records on the Victor label. Katsuhiko became a "singing movie star."

In 1931, Ittoku Murakami (1913-1964), inspired by Yukihiko Haida's steel guitar playing, taught himself to play, starting out on acoustic steel and then moving over to electric. He invented the F6th tuning (FDCAFD, high to low) and cut many sides on the Taihei and Teichiku record labels. During the '50s and '60s, Hawaiian music remained popular, and Yukihiko Haida taught steel guitar to countless music school students.

In 1934, just a couple of years after the Ro-Pat-In company under Adolph Rickenbacher came out with the first frypan, the small factory of Mitsuo Matsuki in Tokyo successfully built Japan's first electric steel guitar, the famed Guyatone, along with a 10-watt amplifier.

In 1935 Bucky Shirakata (1912-1994), a second-generation Japanese-Hawaiian, formed the Aloha Hawaiians,

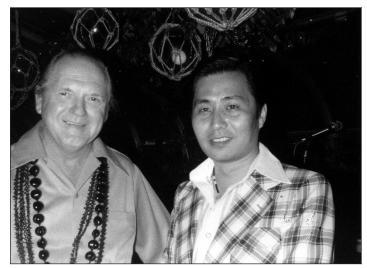
which became the top Hawaiian band in Japan before and after the war. His strong, clear touch, known as "Bucky style," was so popular that almost all steel guitar students tried to imitate it.

Bucky Shirakata was 'King of the Hawaiian Steel Guitar' in Japan, appearing on countless recordings and establishing his reputation as a composer to boot. In his school days, he was a drummer with the McKinley High School Band in Honolulu. Mel Abe was his classmate. To this day many steel players in Japan still play "Bucky Style" using his A minor tuning (ECAECA, high to low).

In 1945, right after the war, Far East Network Radio initiated its Japan broadcast of the famed "Hawai'i Calls" weekly program, which introduced authentic *hapa haole* Hawaiian music to a limited radio audience but, nonetheless, left a strong musical impression that would shape the course of steel guitar in Japan for years to come.

In 1948, Tatsuo "Tony" Otsuka (1922-1998) started his own band, the Palm Serenaders, together with his two younger brothers. He played the E7th tuning (EBG#EDB), which he liked to use on hula songs. His recording of "Kaimana Hila," sung by Ethel Nakada, is an all-time Hawaiian music bestseller in Japan.

On May 13, 1979, the Jerry Byrd trio with Hiram Olsen and Kalani Fernandes performed at Tony Otsuka's Hawaiian



Tom Tohma with Jerry Byrd at his first Hawaiian steel guitar show in Japan at the The Palm club on May 13, 1979. Awesome!

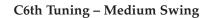
music club "The Palm." The show was broadcast live on the radio and I functioned both as emcee and interpreter. It was the first time I had met Jerry. Hawaiian music professionals of all kinds packed The Palm to listen to Jerry's impeccable steel guitar performance. This was Jerry's first Hawaiian-style show in Japan and it was produced by Mitsuo Fujii, the

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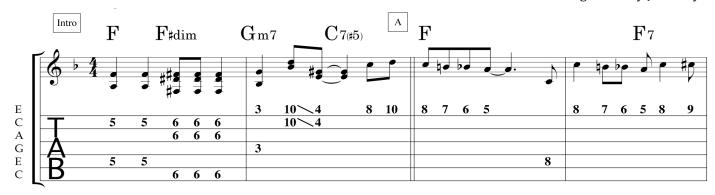


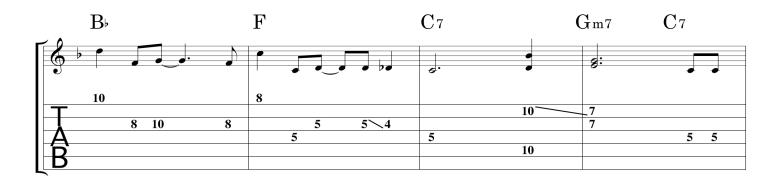
# **Coconut Grove**

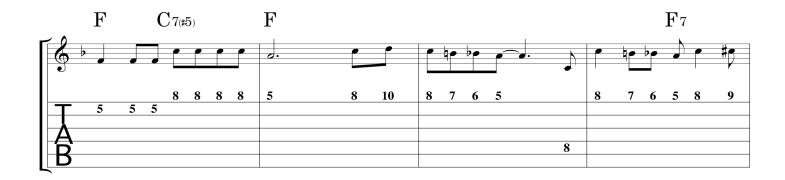
(Harry Owens)

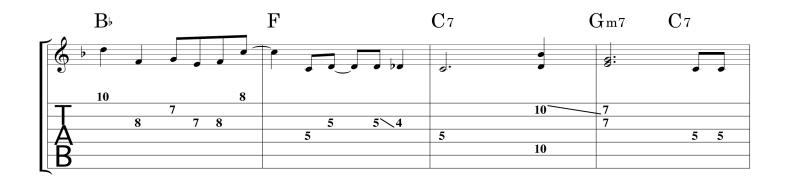


Arrangement by John Ely

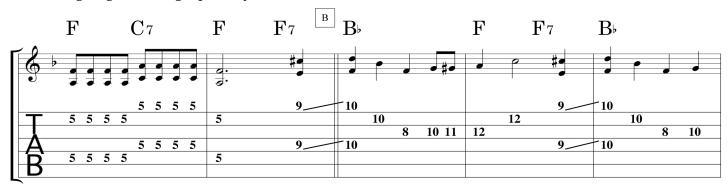


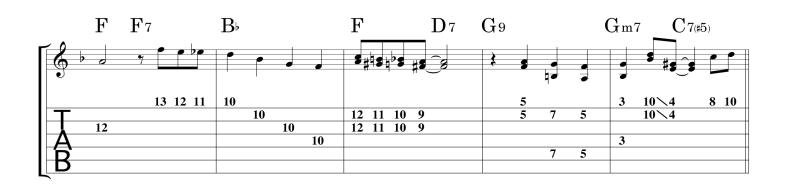


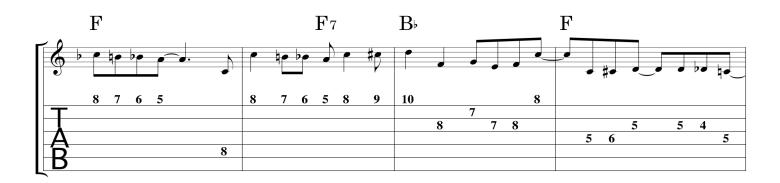


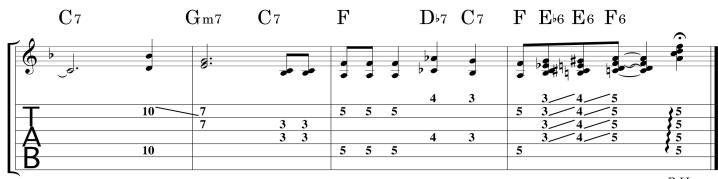


Listen to audio version at: www.hsga.org/new\_design/quarterly.htm









P.H.

# **Another Label Drifts Off Into The Sunset!**

By Bruce Clarke

Sadly, the U.K. label Harlequin Records ceased business as of Christmas 2007. Bad news for Hawaiian music aficionados and steel guitar enthusiasts, as the Harlequin label was one of the better, more accurate, documenters of historic Hawaiiana. John Marsden's cover notes and musical selections for their Hawaiian productions set a standard in authoritative information and wide-ranging programming that very few others have equaled.

For a while there might be small batches of Harlequin stock languishing in the stockrooms of international distributors, and amazon.com may have a few. If so, I would advise all who enjoy and care about the music's glorious past to pick up what they can before the well runs dry.

It was actually the HQ series that inspired me to start the Cumquat Hawaiian Project. John had favored the anthology approach—showcasing a couple of dozen artists playing a diversity of styles on each CD. And since he had covered so much so well, it seemed pointless for Cumquat to follow in the same direction. So I decided to focus on collating, wherever possible, the full scope of certain artists' achievements using both their commercial releases and their previously unavailable radio transcriptions.

Today, at the end of 2007, the Cumquat Hawaiian catalog has reached a total of 63 CDs, all covering the 1928 – 1950 period. However, I must give credit where credit is due and state that very few of those productions would have come to fruition without the input and guidance of John Marsden and Dirk Vogel. As the songwriter once wrote, they were the "Wind Beneath My Wings."

I had estimated that upon the completion of my current projects, hopefully around mid-2008, I would be able to toss in the towel as far as Hawaiian music was concerned and frisbee my lei out upon the waters humming a chorus or two of that famous old farewell song, and eliminate palm trees, steel guitars and 'ukuleles out of my rapidly encroaching dotage. But now, armed with a whole new advanced restoration technology—the mastering of which caused a delay in the release of "Electric Sol" the complete Sol Ho'opi'i 1934 – 36 electric sessions; "Kalua Skies" by Johnny Kaonohi Pineapple and his Native Islanders, Vol. 1; and Ray Kinney, Vol. 4, "Hawaii Sang Me To Sleep"—I can possibly redeem many wonderful tracks that I had previously discarded as 'too hard to tackle'. So providing my time, health and family matters permit it, I may extend my time among the coconuts just a little bit longer. But don't hold your breath because as Woody Herman once sang, "I Ain't Gettin' Any Younger."



Our Joliet 2007 Honored Guest, one dapper Isaac "Doc" Akuna lending expert steel guitar and vocal stylings, and plenty aloha.

## **HSGA** Donations

Thanks to HSGA members who donated to our General Fund and Scholarship Fund this past fall.

Many thanks to perennial "heavy lifter" **Bernie Endaya** from Glendale, California who made a generous contribution of \$100 to our General Fund.

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

Peter Casey, Lucan, Co. Dublin Ireland
Howard Day, Brechin-Lagoon City, ON Canada
Daniel Earp, Satellite Beach, FL
Milton and Nadine Guess, Moss Point, MS
John Hatton, Lansing, MI
Paul Kim, Kane'ohe, HI
Donna Miller, Mesa, AZ
Terry Miller, Vancouver, WA
Dale and Louise Nightwine, Kansas City, KS
Capt. Ivan L. Reddington, Lakeland, FL

# Members, Don't Forget to Vote!

Robert A. Rieder, San Antonio, TX

Yes, it's time to elect your Board of Directors for the 2008-2010 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 March 15. Election results will be announced in the Spring 2008 issue of the HSGA Quarterly.



Charles Buttner from Easton, Pennsylvania playing an Alkire E-harp with Virginia Grzadzinsky and Art Lang on backup.



Jacksonville, Florida member Jeff Strouse plays some swingin' steel with Terry Miller laying down some bass.

## Please Contact Us!

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

## **Email Address Reminder**

We still have bad email addresses in our website directory. Please update us at johnely@hawaiiansteel.com and hsga@hsga.org.



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## **HSGA Board Elections!**

We are pleased to announce that we have a list of 12 candidates to serve on the HSGA Board of Directors from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2010. Mahalos to all these fine candidates for volunteering their service. The candidates are:

Rick Aiello\*
Frank Della-Penna
Dave Giegerich
Pete Kahele\*
Don Keene\*
Chris Kennison
Paul Kim
Terry Miller
Ivan Reddington
Lorene Ruymar\*
Jeff Strouse
Don Weber\*

Our by-laws limit the Board to nine members. Don't forget to vote for 9 candidates using the ballot included with your newsletter. Please send your *signed* ballot by March 15, 2008 to our central office: HSGA, 2434 Waiomao Rd, Honolulu, HI 96816-3424. *No e-mail ballots will be accepted.* 

# 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 HSGA members. Just send your ad to the Quarterly via email or snail mail.

# **Coco Wire**

On November 23, **George "Keoki" Lake** and band were featured live on radio station CKUA in Edmonton, Alberta in celebration of the station's 80th anniversary. The station was the home of Keoki's old radio show "Hawaiian Sunset," which debuted nearly 60 years ago (1949-1952). The show was webcast and linked via the CKUA website at www.ckua.com. Once more, Hawaiian music wafting (southward, we hope!) from the Canadian prairie. Way to go, Keoki!



After a long hiatus Jim Bungard is "drafted" into service, playing steel with Bernice Honold (right) and the other Coral Islanders.

# Hawai'i 2008 Breaking Info!

As you know, Lorene Ruymar has been pushing for an informal Honolulu get-together this coming spring, in spite of the fact that our "real" Honolulu conventions happen on odd years.

We have just heard from reservations agent Janis Cook regarding Queen Kapi'olani rooms. She suggests that members make reservations directly with the hotel rather than go for a block rate, since availability is very open through April and senior rates are very reasonable. Here's the rundown on senior rates.

There are six different classes of rooms you can choose from. Standard rooms go for \$75 and you can pay up to \$125 for an ocean view studio with kitchenette. Rates are good for one or two persons. For more than two, add \$30 per person. Add 12% Hawaii tax to your total.

To make reservations, call the hotel toll free at (800) 367-2317 and tell them you're an HSGA member. You'll need a credit card to confirm.

What dates should you book? Lorene is aiming for the following dates: Friday, April 11 to Monday, May 12, which would include Lei Day (May 1), two 'Steel Guitar Sundays' at the Outrigger Reef and anything else we can think of. But regardless of what dates you choose, please contact Lorene at ruymar@shaw.ca or (604) 263-8944 and let her know you're coming. Then, she can arrange a dinner to make getting together easier once everyone has showed up at the hotel. Let's go for it!

<sup>\*</sup> Denotes incumbent

# Just Out: New Hawaiian Discography

From Malcolm Rockwell

My discography, "Hawaiian and Hawaiian Guitar Records 1891 – 1960," is the culmination of almost 15 years of research. Originally it was an offshoot of my early attempts to catalog my own 78 rpm record collection, which I brought to Hawai'i when I moved here some 20 years ago. Since I already owned numerous discographies for other musical genres, including the pioneering publications of Brian Rust, I thought that a Hawaiian work would be a good thing to have, and so I began one.

About a year into the cataloging I met John Marsden, a steel guitarist and Hawaiian music historian from the U.K., and he has since been my main sounding board and inspiration throughout the process. Without him

I'd still be poking away at it! Through the efforts of HSGA, of which both John and I have been members at one time or another, I met many musicians, studio owners and kumu hula here in Hawai'i who were gracious enough to fill in many of the historical blanks.

Originally, I was just going to catalog the output of Hawaiian material produced in Hawaiii and on the U.S. mainland. But I discovered that Hawaiian music, and Hawaiian steel guitar music in particular, were worldwide phenomena and decided to go for the genre worldwide. The Hawaiian style of steel playing is still how Hawaii is recognized by the rest of the world as epitomizing Hawaii, if not at home, unfortunately.

I have included never before unearthed data from Japan, Sweden, Australia, and Central Europe as well as from Canada, South America and India. It seems that about the only continent that didn't produce Hawaiian music was Antarctica!

The Japanese catalog was an especially hard nut to crack but, with the aid of Keith Grant, another HSGA member, I now have the most complete and up-to-date Japanese-Hawaiian catalog in existence.

The book runs a little over 1400 pages and includes a history of Hawaiian music, a detailed introduction, and instructions on how to read the entries. There are numerous appendices, which include the output of 49th State and Bell records (and other important local labels), artist stats, and other goodies.

The information published is, of necessity, incomplete. I urge users of the work to contact me with any corrections and additions they may have so that the next edition, which I will publish in ten years or so, will be even more complete. I especially urge Hawaiian entertainers and families who note missing personnel to contact me so that the data they hold will not be lost to history.

This book really should have been begun in the early 1950s because so many of the entertainers I show have been lost to us in the ensuing 50 years.

Finally my most heartfelt mahalos go out to the musicians of Hawai'i without whom this work would never have been possible.

"Hawaiian and Hawaiian Guitar Records 1891 - 1960" is ready to ship. The price is \$75 USD and includes a CD-ROM version for computer users, a four-page CD insert, and free shipping anywhere in the world. U.S. and Canadian buyers may pay by U.S. check to Malcolm Rockwell, P.O. Box 1064, Kula, HI 96790-1064. Internet users may pay electronically via PayPal to malcolm@78data.com. For more info write or email using the above addresses.



www.cumquatrecords.com.au

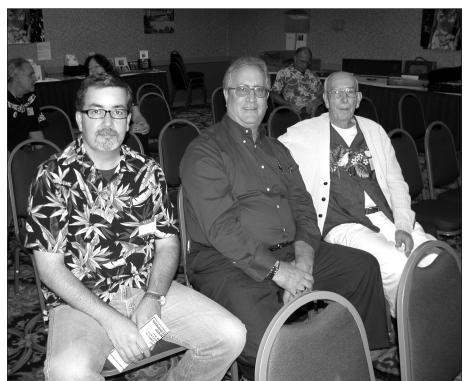
"Hawaii Sang Me To Sleep" - Ray Kinney Volume 5.
"Kalua Skies" - Johnny Pineapple & his Native Islanders.





# **Joliet Togetherness**

As Lorene says, HSGA isn't just about steel guitar! Good-lookin' bunch, eh? (Clockwise from upper left) Part of our "ukulele contingency," John McAuliffe from Ypsilanti, Michigan with wife Sharon; Indiana member Dr. John Davis and wife; Des Plaines, Illinois member Ray Gaitsch (right) and his son Dave sitting with their spanish guitar student Larry Cook (left); more of our "ukulele transplants," Bruce Evans and wife Karol from Michigan; and from Maryland Dave Giegerich of "hula monster" fame with partner Pam McLeod.











# **More Togetherness!**

(Clockwise from upper left) A great shot of Board member Don Keene from California with wife Lynn; Illinois members Terry Cass (left) and longtime Joliet fave Kay Koster from Rockford; a full-on Kitchen reunion at Joliet, Jim Kitchen (left), Rose Kitchen Vogt, Dave Kitchen, and Louie Kitchen; From Vancouver, our Canadian lynchpins, still with plenty of "tiger in their tank," Art and Lorene Ruymar; and Wally Pfeifer in a nice pose with his sister-in-law and cohort Peg Pfeifer.







# Adolph Rickenbacher, Part II

Here's the final installment of Swiss journalist Bänz Friedli's fine article on the history of the Rickenbacher guitar company. (See the Fall 2007 issue for part one.)

In 1934 the company's name was changed to the Electro String Instrument Corporation, and from then on every instrument bore the inscription "Rickenbacher Electro". "Somehow," says CEO John Hall with a smile, "Adolph managed to get every project he was involved in to bear his name sooner or later." A patent, applied for in 1932, was in limbo for years, and Rickenbacher and Beauchamp finally sent a music group to Washington to play for the uptight patent officers, convincing them at last that the electric guitar actually worked. By the time the patent was issued on August 10, 1937, other brands – such as National, Dobro, Gibson, Acousti-Lectric and Epiphone – had long since come on the market.

In 1935 Rickenbacher manufactured the first guitar body out of the hard synthetic known as Bakelite, thus giving birth to the so-called "solid-body" guitar without a resonance chamber. The company's product range was expanded and business was booming. While Beauchamp supervised guitar production in one half of the factory building, Rickenbacher carried on his tool-making in the other. But in 1940 Beauchamp sold him his shares and left the business. The Electro String finally belonged to Adolph and Charlotte alone. Despite the depression of the 1930s, they were now living in style in Beverly Hills, where Rickenbacher was a made man with a fleet of seven automobiles.

Rickenbacher was always boasting about what he had done, and it was never clear just how seriously to take him. He was adamant in his claim to have been involved in the invention of Bakelite in 1909, and he dined out on his story of having mixed the first Manhattan. And then of course he called himself The Father of the Electric Guitar. So was Rickenbacher just a blowhard? After all, he hadn't invented the electric guitar anymore than Elvis had created rock 'n' roll single-handedly: a whole slew of anonymous predecessors had done that. People had been experimenting with Rickenbacher's "invention" since the nineteenth century. Rickenbacher (like Elvis) was simply in the right place at the right time, able to capitalize on his hard-headedness and financial wherewithal to hit pay dirt with a mass phenomenon. "Inventor of the Electric Guitar" would have been a bit pretentious—Rickenbacher was its undisputed "Father".

His factory still stands in a forbidding area of L.A., but the metal grills are locked and a sign announces that 6105 Western Avenue is for sale, call (213) 747-6531. At the company's current headquarters on South Main Street in Santa Ana—from the street a nondescript, windowless green fac-



Adolph Rickenbacher giving us a glimpse of his "million dollar baby," the prized wooden Rickenbacher frypan prototype.

tory shed—65 employees are doing precision handwork, among them many Latinos and Vietnamese. They are using a machine calibrated to a thousandth of a millimeter to cut guitar bodies out of maple wood, spraying on paint, drilling, soldering, gluing, winding copper wire and attaching magnetic plates to the pick-ups. "The competition has its pick-ups made in Korea, China and Mexico," says John Hall. "But we invented ours, so we're still making them ourselves 75 years later." His father, F.C. Hall, bought the company from Rickenbacher, then 66 years old, on December 17, 1953, a few weeks before Bill Haley and Elvis Presley exploded on the scene and rock 'n' roll was born. Rickenbacher, bent on retirement, built his villa in Fullerton and purchased a ranch in Redlands, California.

There was never any question of changing the company name. "Rickenbacker just sounds better than my name," says Hall. Of all the famous brands of guitar known the world over, the Rickenbacker today has a reputation as a bijou, the only one "proudly produced in the USA" while the competition, from Fender to Gibson, has been manufacturing parts or even entire instruments on the cheap in the Far East for some time now. "We're the Porsche of guitars: high quality, low production," says Hall.

If you think that Adolph Rickenbacher is perceived as a Swiss in the United States, then you don't know anything about the place. Except for the one percent of their population made up of native people, all US citizens have immigrants in their family trees, and are no less American for all that. Still, the head of Rickenbacker sets store by the company's connection to Switzerland, given that "Swiss" is a byword for craftsmanship and precision. And Hall is quick

to rave about his skiing vacation in Grindelwald, as well as the beauty of the Lake of Lucerne. He would have liked to have the Swiss cross engraved into the 10,000 or so instruments his crew produces each year, but the Swiss government nixed his request. Undaunted, Hall continues to dream of moving part of his production to Switzerland, and has already embarked on negotiations with the cantons of Vaud, Jura, Valais and Neuchâtel.

"There are a hundred things that we could improve and make better, but we almost don't dare do them, because every time we add some innovation to the product everyone seems to think that we've broken it. It's such a weird phenomenon. We're definitely trapped," chuckles Hall, a pained expression on his face. "We're held back by the customer's wish for a retro look." Most of the more than 1,800 different models Rickenbacker International turns out today are reditions of guitars from the fifties and sixties. "Can you imagine someone wanting to go out and purchase a perfect vintage replica of say a 1954 television set? There's no market there for that." But guitarists have just got to have the old-time model...

Hall would give anything to be building aesthetically pleasing, mechanically and electronically sophisticated instruments, but the guitar that was once wielded like a weapon on the barricades has hardened into a classic, a symbol. It is the youth of today who prize it as a token of resistance against the digitalized world they grew up in and are sick of. They need something they can hold in their hands, something that looks like it did back then, when music was still hard work—and, oh yeah, something that makes you pine for a little blood, sweat and tears. Still, the boss does have one consolation: "Essentially, electronics haven't changed from that first 1931 guitar. I guess you could say it was a good product."

Actually Hall doesn't need to work at all, since his family has done well in the oil and real estate business, but the amateur musician still comes in to sit behind his desk every day, along with his wife, his daughter and his son. It's a family business, after all. The company could be eight to ten times larger, says Hall, considering the demand for its products. "We don't need to outdo ourselves each year. Part of that comes from the fact that we have no outside investors. We also have no loans; we have no banks involved in our business. It's strictly my wife and myself." All investors care about is money, he reckons, while to him, each individual guitar remains "a work of art."

The company is particularly proud of the "neck-throughbody" construction used on most Rickenbacker models, which involves carving the guitar's main components out of one single piece of wood rather than gluing its neck and body together. But can you hear the difference in quality? "I've always said that it's the neck-through-body drawing that is probably the most important part of the guitar sound," answers Hall, "the way the energy of the string is transmitted through the neck, that's where the sound of a guitar is. [ED: In a similar vein, the Rickenbacher Electro steel guitars have that famous string-through-the-body feature touted by Jerry Byrd and others—a way to get more of the sound of the guitar body to the string.] Neck-through-body is harder to manufacture but it sounds better." You can check it out on the Beatles' "Hard Day's Night," for example. John's father F.C. Hall landed his biggest public relations coup when he guided the Fab Four to a New York hotel suite during their first visit to the United States and handed them Rickenbacker guitars—which they then went on to play on their American tour, watched by 70 million TV viewers. And his father didn't even especially like the Beatles' newfangled music, notes Hall.

The company is still living off of Beatlemania, although John Lennon and Paul McCartney did in fact buy their first Rickenbackers themselves, in Hamburg, because it was the instrument of choice for their idol, Belgium's [harmonica virtuoso] Toots Thielemans.

"Adolph Rickenbacher continued to make sure everything was in good shape even after he had long since ceased to own the company," recalls Richard Burke in Santa Ana. Burke, who joined Rickenbacker in 1958 as a carpenter, rose to be production manager and stayed on until his retirement 42 years later. "Adolph would come by the factory almost every week, always in the mood to kid around." And always ready for business. "One week before he died he was still trying to sell me a Buick," says Burke. "He was a dealmaker, but he always played fair. I bought a 1957 Ford Ranchero from him that ran like a dream." Only 25 people attended Rickenbacher's funeral on March 10, 1976 in Loma Vista Memorial Park in Fullerton. "It was a shame! Adolph deserved better. But the Rickenbacker guitar! You just know he would have been pleased as punch to hear that it still bears his name."

Adolph Rickenbacher was "a character," even if he did occasionally also indulge in morbid humor. Orphaned young, he had been forced to make it all alone in a foreign country. And, although his success was due to his many talents, there was one thing The Father of the Electric Guitar never did manage to learn how to do: play the guitar.

Adolph Rickenbacher is one of the main figures featured in the exhibition "Small Number – Big Impact: Swiss Immigration to the USA." Curated by the Association for a Swiss Migration Museum, the show will open on July 29, 2006, on New York's Ellis Island before going on to the Swiss National Museum in Zurich in spring of 2007.

As published in Die Weltwoche and Rolling Stone (Germany). Used with permission of the author.

# E komo mai! Welcome, New Members

*Is your address correct? Please notify us!* 

### **UNITED STATES**

ARMAND BERTACCHI, 1129 Belter Dr., Wheaton, IL 60187
BOB BORZELLERI, 21760 One Fine Place, Colfax, CA 95713
BRUCE EVANS, 7441 Pinegrove Dr., Jenison, MI 49428
JACK AND SHIRLEY EVANS, 2025 Arbor Ln, Mound, MN 55364
PATRICK HICKEY, 1710 Devonwood Dr., Springfield, IL 62704
THERMAN JONES, 522 N. Main St., Broken Arrow, OK 74012-2621
JOHN MCCLUNG, 625 W. 8th St. #6, San Pedro, CA 90731
DON E. MCGREGOR, 312 Marzee Ann Dr, Jonesboro, AR 72401-9710
GARY MEIXNER, 4724 Green Bay Road, Warsaw, NY 14569
JAMIE O'CONNELL, 99 Winsor Ave, Watertown, MA 02472
MEL RIVAS, 35230 South Border, Thousand Palms, CA 92276
DONALD A. RODGERS, 8906 Taurus Pl., San Diego, CA 92126-1939
JIM ROETH, 3254 Lake Ridge #A, Dubuque, IA 52003
ANDY SANDOVAL, 1706 1st St., Bakersfield, CA 93304

### **OVERSEAS**

HOWARD DAY, 66 Simcoe Rd., Brechin-Lagoon City, ON LOK 1BO Canada JOSEPHINE JOHNSON AND DERECK OSTIGUY, 165 Loring Way West, P.O. Box 564, Lytton, BC V0K 1Z0 Canada

JIM AND LOUISE VANDERZONBROUWER, 10307-168 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5X 2Z7 Canada

TAKAFUMI MIMURA, 4-37 Iriyamazu-cho, Yokosuka-shi, Kanagawa 238-0051 Japan TSUNEYO AND NOBUKO OKAMOTO, 1-48 Uraga-cho, Yokosuka-shi, Kanagawa 237-0062 Japan

JAPAN Continued from Page 9

owner of the Fuzzy Guitar Company. Jerry had actually performed along with Buddy Emmons the year before at Mitsuo's steel guitar show in Tokyo, Jerry's first trip to Japan, but the music featured was more country and western, and jazz style.

As to steel tunings in Japan, the F6th tuning of Ittoku Murakami, Tony Otsuka's E7 tuning, and especially Bucky Shirakata's A minor tuning were the standard that many players started with during the early decades of steel guitar in Japan. Since then the C6 tuning has emerged and is gaining in popularity among Japanese players.

I should mention that two steel players, Hideo "Pos" Miyazaki (1922-1976) and Setsuo Ohashi (1925-2006), also shared the spotlight with Bucky Shirakata and Tony Otsuka in the post-

war years. "Pos" Miyazaki was the first player in Japan to use a pedal steel guitar to play Hawaiian music. Inspired by Alvino Rey's recording work, he added four handmade wooden pedals to his steel guitar in order to play diminished chords. However, his pedal instrument was unreliable and often malfunctioned during stage performances. Setsuo Ohasi used Bucky's A minor tuning and mainly played and composed Japanese pop-style songs.

While attending college in 1957, I bought a 6-string Teisco steel guitar from a classmate who happened to be one of Ittoku Murakami's students. I used the F6th tuning and began to teach myself to play. My idol at that time was Jules Ah See.

At age forty, I changed jobs from the William Wrigley Jr. Company to Eastman Kodak Company and I bought a Fender 1000 10-string pedal steel with 10 pedals. Thanks to its efficient mechanism, I could easily change the pedal setup to my own system. It was the first time I used the C6th tuning (GECAGECAGC) and I am still using it on my Excel pedal steel, which has 10 strings, 10 pedals, and 2 knee levers (see the diagram below).

Pedal work with or without knee levers allows me to create diminish and augment chords and also allows me to improvise easily. I'll continue to play Hawaiian music with my pedal steel guitar as long as I can carry it (20 kilos) without hurting my back or shoulder!

Tom's tuning with pedal and knee lever setup (LKL=left knee lever, RKL=right knee lever).

