

HSGA QUARTERLY

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

Volume 25, Issue 96

Fall 2009



Inside this Issue...

- 5 A Word from HSGA President Paul Kim
- 5 "Some Joliet Mahalos" from Don Weber
- 6 "Steelin' to St. Louis" by Lorene Ruymar
- 8 Members Corner – News and Photos from Members
- 8 Buy & Sell – Member Advertisements
- 9 "The Lane Vifinkle Story" from Lorene Ruymar
- 10 "Hawaiian Paradise" – Steel Arrangement by John Ely
- 12 "HSGA Spotlight – Kay Koster" from Paul Warnik
- 13 "Lion's Lock Lever Steel Guitar" from K. Kobayashi
- 14 Closing Notes – Ray Gaitsch and Robert Barry
- 14 "European Steel Guitar Hall of Fame Launches"
- 15 "Ken Emerson Sighting!" from Lorene Ruymar
- 16 Joliet 2009 Convention Photo Gallery
- 18 Disc 'n' Data – Recordings Review



A super action shot of former HSGA President, Doug Smith, amazing the audience with his annual, now mandatory, display of competition-level roping wizardry. Awesome!

Members "Weigh In" On Joliet 2009

Because we don't have our usual convention reporters on the job this time around, we thought we'd print some actual feedback we received from members who attended.

Kamaka Tom, Honolulu, HI

According to Joliet Committee Chairman Don Weber, attendance was down at the Lū'au Show this year. Also the raffle and related sales during the convention were a bit down. Probably to be expected in a tough year for the world economy.

I think the brightest spot was John Ely's presence and fine performances on steel. Overall, the musicianship on stage keeps improving every year. Ian Ufton and Dick Martiny played excel-

lent guitar backup, along with Gerald Ross and many others. Virginia did a lot of bass backup, too. Gil O'Gawa contributed a lot this year, backing up Ivan Reddington, Duke Ching, and myself on vocals, banjo, and uke.

There were a few new performers featured on stage, including Wyoming member Cecil Brasiel. We missed perennials Lorene and Art Ruymar and also "fiddlin'" Barbara Kuhns, who usually comes with Doug Smith. We also missed hula dancer Leigh Bell, who was in Boston during the Lū'au Show. Thanks to Mike "Kimo" Beeks and Greg Wong, Duke Ching was able to include a dance segment in the Saturday night floorshow.

Continued on Page 2

HSGA QUARTERLY

Volume 25, Issue 96



OFFICERS

Paul Kim, President
Don Keene, Vice-President
Don Weber, Secretary-Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Frank Della-Penna, Washington, DC
Pete Kahele, California
Chris Kennison, Colorado
Terry Miller, Washington State
Capt. Ivan L. Reddington, Florida
Lorene Ruymar, BC, Canada

PAST PRESIDENT

Kamaka Tom

DIRECTOR EMERITUS

Jerry Byrd

JAPAN COORDINATOR

Tom Ikehata Tohma

QUARTERLY EDITOR

John Ely

WEBMASTER

Gerald Ross <gbross@umich.edu>

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

JOLIET 2009 Continued from Page 1

John Hamilton, New York City

Back in April 2008, when I was truly wet behind the ears regarding lap steel, I encountered Gerald Ross at UkeFest in New York City where my band had just played. We talked for a few minutes and he pushed me to attend that year's Joliet convention. Unfortunately, life got busy and I ended up missing it to my great disappointment. I vowed that I would attend in 2009.

I checked in at the hotel late Wednesday night and was about to head up to my room when I realized that the conference room was right across from the lobby. I decided to figure out the layout of the convention so that I wouldn't have to deal with it first thing in the morning. I poked my head in and to my surprise and delight, there stood my long lost contact, Gerald Ross. Gerald recognized me immediately and then introduced me to the guy he was talking to, the convention's guest of honor, John Ely. I immediately felt "in." John and Gerald couldn't have been nicer or more welcoming, a trait that I was to find they shared with all of the attendees.

Next morning, I headed downstairs for (complimentary!) breakfast, which was delicious and then went in to the conference room. After the opening welcome, the music began. Over the next three days my fellow conventioners and I were treated to a variety of fantastic steel performances. The performances varied somewhat in style and skill level, but I came away from all of them with more inspiration than I've ever had as a steel guitarist.

Among my favorite performances were those that featured members of Bernice Honold's Coral Islanders. The fun they appeared to have on stage was contagious. Their bass player, Virginia Grzadzinski, is also worthy of praise along with Dick Martiny for their exceptional job as rhythm section to many of the acts who played throughout the convention.

The evening seminars were informative and entertaining. Don Fullmer and Phil Bender presented chord theory the first night and John Ely led a question-and-answer session on Friday.

The other very helpful evening activity for me was the jam sessions, which gave me a low-pressure opportunity to get my Supro out and play. I

At the Saturday Lū'au, Duke Ching and John Ely (right) playing a duet of "Beautiful Kahana" with Virginia Grzadzinski on upright bass and Ian Ufton on rhythm guitar.





Perennial Joliet favorite Kay Koster on steel with singer Sharon Angelo on acoustic guitar and Virginia on upright bass.

picked up some great tips from Duke Ching, Ivan Reddington, and Chris Kennison who were all gracious and patient in offering their help.

The final night's lū'au was a wonderful opportunity to hear more playing from Duke Ching and John Ely, and gave everyone at the convention the chance to socialize with one another. It was a very special way to wrap up the convention and the food was delicious, too!

My first trip to an HSGA convention ended up far surpassing any expectations that I had—absolutely worth the trip. The hotel was comfortable and clean and staffed by friendly, helpful people. My fellow attendees were, without exception, welcoming and wonderful to be around. The convention gave me a chance to talk shop about steel guitar and exchange ideas and information. There wasn't a single negative moment for me, and I hope that down the road I can recommend to a beginning steel player that they make the trip to the next HSGA convention.

Jamie O'Connell, Watertown, MA

This was my first HSGA Convention, but I am so glad that I made the effort to attend. After checking into the hotel on Wednesday evening, I went to the main function room and read the bulletin board notices. I had signed up for a Friday afternoon playing slot and was interested in finding out how the logistics worked with that. Imagine my dismay at reading that it was incumbent on players to supply their own backup musicians. But, I didn't know anyone yet! As luck would have it (and within 10 minutes), I had introduced myself to Chris Kennison, Craig Stenseth, Gerald Ross, Ian Ufton and a clean-shaven John Ely. Chris and Craig agreed to back me up even though they had no idea whether I could play or not. This certainly put me at ease and I was truly

surprised at how nice and friendly everyone was. I did end up performing a short set on Friday afternoon and did "Kilima Waltz," "My Tane," "Estrellita" and "Sand."

Various recollections: Sharing a ride from the airport in a stretch limo with the Bahrets. Ten of us going to Syl's Restaurant Thursday night and demanding separate checks; the food was delicious. Meeting Duke Ching and getting a compliment on my playing from him. Duke and Kamaka Tom performing the Beverly Hillbillies theme song. John Ely playing country tunes from his past life including a wonderful version of "Panhandle Rag." Gerald Ross performing on four different instruments within a single day, including some outstanding steel guitar. Sneaking cigarette breaks with Millie Tipka and hearing her Jerry Byrd stories. Extended roping demonstration by Doug Smith (he was amazing) to give John Ely time to get back from dinner. Wonderful pre-lū'au music by Kay Das. Final Saturday night jam session, doing Hank Williams tunes with Dick Martiny on vocals and guitar, Kay Das and Dave Kolars on steel, and me on string bass. Sharing a ride to the airport in a stretch limo with Ivan Reddington and Dee Ryan. Feeling like I have been adopted by a new, large family.

Ian Ufton, Brampton, Ontario

Well, for those regulars who missed the convention, it was something special. John Ely played four great sets, from good country to beautiful hawaiian style with a nice melodic jazz touch. It doesn't get much better than that, folks. It was my pleasure to help him perform, along with my bass-playing friend Virginia Grzadzinski who does it *right!* Lets not wait another seven years before we bring him back.

Continued on Page 4

Dave Gaitsch (left) on guitar backing up Ed Knaack on steel.



Duke Ching, Highland, CA

For the first time in 20 years, we had no *wahine* hula dancers in our floor show. However, the all *kane* (male) hula dancers picked up the slack and put on an awesome show. Mahalo to our band, which was composed of myself as producer-director and steel guitarist, Ian Ufton on guitar, Virginia Grzadzinski on bass, and Kamaka Tom on the 'ukulele. The floor show featured our lovely *kane* dancers, Mike "Kimo" Beeks, Kamaka Tom, and Greg Wong who really knew how to "swing their hips" and mesmerized the audience with their hula movements. Who said *kanes* cannot dance? Donna Miller serenaded us with her beautiful renditions of "Beyond the Reef" and "Aloha Week Hula." Then our own Doc Gil O'Gawa did his famous "Hawaiian Scotsman" and "My Little Grass Shack." John Ely and I did a steel guitar duet of "Beautiful Kahana," which was also greeted with a big round of applause from the audience. I must also give credit to all who were willing participants and danced the "Hukilau" with Kimo as their *kumu hula*. All in all, this year's show was filled with lots of warm aloha spirit.

John and Joanne Plas, Wellington, OH

Thanks to all who came to Joliet, the backup players and the steel players who practiced all year. Thanks, Don Weber, for running such a smooth program. Thanks Millie Tipka, for your lovely handmade crafts and your years doing the raffle. Thanks Donna Miller and Peg Pfeiffer for hosting the greeting table with beautiful smiles. Thanks, Julie Waters, for your auction donation. We do so miss you and Bob.

At each convention, a few songs tend to be repeated more than others. Joliet 2009 favored "Waikiki," "Harbor

Mike Scott turning in a nahenahe (sweet) performance on steel guitar with Ian Ufton, Virginia, and Gerald Ross (unpictured).



(left to right) Chicago-area member Craig Stenseth on bass, Pete Norman on uke, and Dave Kolars from DeKalb, Illinois on steel.

Lights" and "Hana." Virginia Grzadzinski surprised us on her very own steel with fun songs. We were inspired by a few rarely played songs from John Ely, Mike Scott, Dick Lloyd, Bernice Honold and Art and Mae Lang. John's "Talk Story" and demonstrating his hand placement for harmonics was fun and easy to try later.

Duke Ching and Kamaka Tom took us back to the nostalgic radio show "Hawaii Calls." Twin steels from Duke Ching and John Ely were sweetly harmonic melodies to savor at the Lū'au Show. The show also featured audience participation with our hula dancers leading. Even the little grandkids of Ron Simpson enjoyed this.

Weather in Illinois was the same: sunny and wet, cold and wet, and windy and wet. Also, the traffic light for Bob Evans is still too fast for this crowd whether walking or driving. Mahalos to Wally and Peg Pfeifer for the outstanding printed programs. Thanks for taking care of the details for us. Thanks to Betty and Bo Bahret who loyally mail the newsletter four times a year. Lorene and Art Ruymar, thanks for believing in a world music club. Seasons change but spirit of music and fellowship is ageless and timeless. Thanks for this opportunity to share steel music with members from around the world. ■

Mahalo, Members!

Keep those great letters and photos coming! If possible, send original photographs or output from a digital camera. We cannot use grainy or washed out photos. Photos will be returned on request. Please send news, comments, or photos to: HSGA Quarterly, 2434 Waiomao Road, Honolulu, HI 96816-3424. Email us at hsga@hsga.org and johnely@hawaiiansteel.com.

From Your President

Aloha, fellow Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association members and steel guitar enthusiasts. This message is from your president who could not attend this year's Joliet Convention due to conflicting events.

I really do wish I could have attended the convention. It is always a pleasure to hear the steel guitar ring from beginners and professionals alike. I love playing backup, singing, and making people laugh while onstage. It is remarkable to see all of you people who truly love the sound of the steel guitar and all of the emotions that this instrument evokes in all of us. Music is, indeed, a universal language that communicates to all of us, whether we understand the language or not. Instruments of all kinds give music body and soul, and the steel guitar is one that takes the song over the top. I am glad to be a part of the legacy of perpetuating this wonderful instrument for future generations to enjoy.

It is also amazing to see the passion that the HSGA members have to play and listen to the one instrument invented in Hawai'i. Hats off to those of you who made it to Joliet even though times are rough and the economy bad. As age catches up to a lot of the present members, I hope the younger generations will appreciate all that you have done to make this association a successful one and will not let the steel guitar die.

I would also like to thank those who work hard and donate their time every year to make the convention a success, to our special guest artist this year, John Ely, and to all who brave the stage to share their love for the instrument. Hats off to the backup musicians as well. For without them, the steel guitar could not shine and stand out as the beautiful instrument that it is.

Me ke aloha pumehana, Paul Kim ■

Duane Solley playing steel (E-Harp?) with Art Lang on guitar.



Some Joliet Mahalos

From Joliet Chairman Don Weber

On behalf of Wally Pfeifer, I want to thank Donna Miller and Peg Pfeifer for doing their usual great job at the Joliet reception desk.

Thanks to Fred Campeau and Paul Watkins for the fantastic sound they provided. Thanks to Millie Tipka for conducting the raffle sales. Thanks to Donna Miller, Peg Pfeifer, and Millie Tipka for providing the raffle prizes.

Thanks to the Holiday Inn and Althea Walker for treating us to the daily *free* breakfast buffet. Thanks to John Ely for being a great guest this year. We enjoyed the "Talk Story" and the great music. See you all next year. ■

Moving?

For uninterrupted delivery of your HSGA Quarterly, please keep us informed of any address changes. Update us at our office address: HSGA Quarterly, 2434 Waiomao Rd, Honolulu, HI 96816-3424. Mahalo nui loa!

HSGA Donations

Special thanks to HSGA members who came through this past fall with nice donations in spite of continued hard times with the world economy.

First, we received an extremely generous anonymous donation of \$500. You know who you are! **Gilbert O'Gawa** donated \$153 to our General Fund. **Cathe Alexander** donated \$100 in memory of her husband Rick Alexander who we lost earlier this year. **Bill Thomson** of Ocean City, Maryland contributed \$100 to our Scholarship Fund.

Kiyoshi "Lion" Kobayashi, Greg Sardinha, and Paul Kim, each donated to our General Fund their \$75 honorarium for performing in the 2009 Jerry Byrd Ho'olaule'a.

Chuck Wilson continues to donate \$10 for each sale of the Billy Hew Len CD he produced. The donation is made on behalf of the purchasers: Kristabelle Munson, Scott Thomas, Norman Markowitz, and Matthew Dawson.

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

John Bell, Lawrence, KS
Leon and Libby Jo Brannan, Royal Palm Beach, FL
Rick Collins, Claremont, CA
Jerry Croom, Hemet, CA
Edwin K. Maunakea, Jr., Killeen, TX
Russell and Kathleen Pollock, Zanesville, OH
Ron Whittaker, Newcastle, Staffs. England

Steelin' To St. Louis

By Lorene Ruymar

I must confess it. Two of the most faithful HSGA members went to “Scotty’s Bash,” now in its 38th year, instead of to Joliet this year.

The very first convention HSGA ever held was in 1986 at St. Louis under Scotty’s umbrella. That’s when we decided on Joliet as our permanent annual meeting place.

In 1993 Art and I went to Scotty’s Bash along with Merle and Ronnie Kekuku, when they inducted Merle’s uncle Joseph Kekuku, the inventor of the steel guitar, into the Steel Guitar Hall of Fame. Since 1986 the hotel has changed its name from Regal Riverfront to Clarion to Millennium, and how it has grown!! More \$\$\$, too.

Scotty and his family have been holding steel guitar conventions there since 1971. They own and manage Scotty’s music store, too. Scotty and his wife Mary made a very wise move. They produced a family—I think it’s six kids—who were trained to run the store and manage the steel guitar conventions before they learned their ABCs. Wherever we looked, there was a Scott of first, second, or third generation—by birth or by marriage—managing the stage, sound system, business desks, hosting, PA announcements, and food and beverages. We heard hints about all the other services they were prepared to offer, but I think those kids were just joking. Just having a yuk yuk at grampaw. We never met a more friendly, hard working family. Good looking, too... on Mary’s side. Yuk! Yuk!

”So, what caused this truant behavior?” you ask. Why did Art and I make the long trek from Vancouver to Toronto to St. Louis overnight? It was a phone call from Scotty saying that an award was about to be made in my honor. I couldn’t fail to turn up in that case, could I??

Scotty’s Bash lasts four days. Here’s what we saw: Thursday, September 3 the early birds had time to show their stuff on stage. On Friday there was a Hawaiian session in a smaller hall while seminars were held in other rooms. Later in the day and all day Saturday, the grand hall, which seats about 1,800 was in full swing as one steel guitarist after another performed 30-minute sets with stage band backup: rhythm and lead guitars, keyboard, bass and drums. Some players had vocalists on stage.

Out in the hallway and in adjoining rooms vendors set up their displays to show and sell their products. The hotel staff set up tables and chairs, and brought their quick lunch and dinners down to the convention floor so we didn’t have to miss anything by going up to the restaurant.

To make the trip easier for us, Scotty provided us with an eight-string JB Frypan for us to use. And would you believe it? It was Jerry’s own, about to be put on display in the Steel



Club founder, Lorene Ruymar, receiving her Jerry Byrd Lifetime Achievement Award at Scotty’s Convention. Congrats, Lorene!

Guitar Hall of Fame!! We were careful not to remove Jerry’s fingerprints when we played it.

On Sunday morning there was a church service with no less than *four* pedal steel guitarists sharing the service. Ron Elliott played the last show, bringing Scotty’s Bash to a close by 4:30 PM Sunday.

I’m deliberately saving the “awards” story until the end. Before that, I want to make a general assessment kind of statement. I will sound negative, because I speak from an HSGA point of view: it was all about pedal steel guitars. Very, very few non-pedals. In fact, there was a time when Scotty marched onto the stage with his old-time 6-string long scale Rickenbacher non-pedal steel guitar and played a few tunes. In my opinion, he stole the show. His playing was clear and positive. We could enjoy the melody. The general trend among pedal steelers seems to be to over-stress the pedals and knee levers, with very little melody picking coming from the fingers.

I think this is the era of the vocalist. The instrumentalists in showbiz now-a-days spend all evening providing a cushion for the singers and if they get any melody time, it’s shared between the piano, guitar, mandolin, fiddle, banjo, violin, and the steel guitar. It’s no wonder we don’t hear the melody coming from those strings. The other dominant element is *loudness*. If you say, “It’s *loud*,” that means you want it turned *louder*. The boys at the controls knew which way to turn the knobs.

At least during the Hawaiian segment the music was not so loud and there were fewer backup instruments. Still, ped-

als outnumbered the non-pedal guitars. L.T. Zinn was chief of the Hawaiian section, which included a Hawaiian show with eight lovely hula dancers. So now you can call him Ali'i Tee Zinn!

Art and I performed twice. Once during the Hawaiian event, and once in the "big tent." Both times we did our silly "couple that would rather switch than fight" routine. It starts with me on steel, Art on rhythm guitar. After four numbers, we switch instruments and finish our 30-minute time. I played half Hawaiian, half country tunes. Art played all Hawaiian. The silly point is my so-called country tunes are long ago forgotten. The tunes now being played at Scotty's are nothing we could recognize. Is there such a thing as country rock? Or, must be the pedals and levers have put too much whoof and whoosh and braaap into the sound, so that the melody—if the fingers really are picking one—is not to be heard. I cannot say that sort of thing in the write-up, can I?! [ED: That's right, Lorene. You certainly cannot.]

Now for the dessert! The plaque that Scotty presented to me is worded as follows: "The Steel Guitar Hall of Fame presents the Jerry Byrd Lifetime Achievement Award. Presented to Lorene Ruymar. For your extensive research leading to your book outlining the history of the steel guitar, your impressive instruction material teaching young players around the world to play the Hawaiian steel guitar, and your founding the Hawaiian Steel Guitar Association... Presented September 5, 2009." At this point Jerry must have reached down from the clouds, because it's his signature. "The Steel Guitar Hall Of Fame, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri."

Next came the three who were inducted into the Steel Guitar Hall of Fame. Ron Carter, Ron Elliott, and, believe it



(back, l. to r.) Doug Jernigan, Norm Hamlett, Roy Ayres, Barbara Mandrell, Herby Wallace, Ron Elliott, Billy Robinson (hidden) and Scotty; (front, l. to r.) Don Warden, Bud Carter, and L.T. Zinn.

or not, the beautiful, famous Barbara Mandrell!! I can now stretch the truth a bit and say, "I shared the same stage with Barbara Mandrell." She just came to receive her award and then left, but it was some thrill to see her!

My story has come to its end, boys and girls, and every word of it is true. The moral of the story is "Great and exciting as Scotty's big event is, there's nothing like the sweet steel guitar music and the personal good friendship of all our club members when we meet in Joliet every October. I hope we will be able to celebrate our 38th year someday, too, and our ears will still be able to hear the buzzing of a bee in the coconut tree."

One more item I would like to include, is about the new steel guitar invented and built by Mitsuo "Fuzzy" Fuji, and demonstrated by Kiyoshi "Lion" Kobayashi at Scotty's. It's a small, simple 8-stringer with a bank of levers along the bottom edge of the fretboard. Each lever changes the strings to a different tuning. Imagine the possibilities! When Lion played it, there were still a few glitches but no doubt all that will be perfect very soon. [ED: See the write-up about this unique instrument on page 13.]

One final note of interest: Steve Robinson, a NASA astronaut and steel player, brought a banner to Scotty's Bash to have people sign it, and he will take it with him on his next flight, Space Shuttle mission STS-130 scheduled for February 4, 2010. The banner was completely full with names of premier steel guitar performers. The banner will be returned to the Steel Guitar Hall of Fame for its archives. Says Scotty, "Mary and I have been invited as VIP guests to watch the space launch from inside the Kennedy Space Center complex in Florida. Wow! Steve must have set that up." ■

Aloha JOE®

America's Premier Hawaiian Radio & TV Station

**Aloha Joe Radio and TV
plays all your island favorites
24/7/365**



You'll hear
Steel Guitar
Ukulele & Slack Key
Every hour!

www.ALOHAJOE.com
www.ALOHAJOETV.com

MEMBERS CORNER

“Keoki” Lake, Edmonton, Canada

A reliable source in Hawai‘i has informed me Uncle Jacob Kaleikini has been experiencing quite a few blackouts and was hospitalized a couple of times recently. His condition is not good.

Jacob requested to be at home over the weekend [ED: the same weekend as the Joliet Convention] as at 94, he may not be with us much longer. His daughter returned from the mainland to be with him. Jacob is aware that “father time” has caught up with him and wishes to be home with his family should the worst happen.

Among his many other musical accomplishments during the Golden Years of Hawaiian entertainment as a steel guitarist, rhythm guitarist, bass, ‘ukulele and wonderful falsetto (“E Mama E”), Jacob is also one of the last surviving members of the famed John Almeida’s Old Timers group.

Those of us who know and love Jacob pray he may survive for a few more years. [ED: We received sad news at press time that Jacob’s wife, Ana “Mary” Oku-Kaleikini, passed away at age 88 on October 16.]

Edwin K. Maunakea, Killeen, TX

HSGA is surely growing! I had been one of the first directors upon its organizing. I miss [my] home in Hawai‘i, but continue to share the music of Hawai‘i here in Texas.

Pete Kahele, Cerritos, California

We just had our annual Ho‘olaule‘a at Alondra Park in the City of Gardena, California. This two-day event draws thousands of people from all over the state, as well as Nevada and Arizona. They come because of the entertainment, food concessions provided by the different Hawaiian clubs throughout Southern California and vendors that sell plumerias, Hawaiian jewelry, Hawaiian books, and ‘ukuleles.

This year I was fortunate to play steel guitar with three *halaus* (schools of hula). One interesting note: I had a curious audience watching me play the steel. Some were young adults. In fact, in between performances a couple of them asked me, “What kind of instrument are you playing?” or “Is that a slide guitar?” When I respond that it’s a Hawaiian steel guitar, I got a look of amazement in their eyes. When I tell them that this is the Signature Sound of Hawai‘i, then I get a long ‘Ohhhhhhh’. I’m glad to know that they’re curious and interested. I guess the next step is to get them playing the steel guitar. That’s the challenge!

Harold Boggs, Oklahoma City, OK

I surely enjoy the club magazine. I’m now 91 years old and I’m still playing my steel guitar! People really love to hear it. A big aloha to all.

Jan Tavares, Ventura, CA

I just had the greatest time in Long Beach over the weekend at Nā Mamo’s E Hula Mau Convention and Hula Competition with my wife Elaine in Long Beach. When I was a kid I could take Hawaiian music or leave it. Now I sure miss it. I particularly enjoyed the *kahiko* or “old-time” hula competition with the *ipu-heke* gourd and drum accompaniment and chanting. I do not remember seeing my mom and dad doing this but the sounds and motions are so familiar to me. [ED: Jan’s father was famed steel guitarist Ernie Tavares.] I must have heard them when a toddler so long ago.

With old time Hawaiian-style music it is truly a trip back to my ancestral roots, and I see visions of my mother dancing and Dad and my Uncle Freddy playing as I sit in the audience and enjoy it. The first year my mom taught school in Hana “down the island” on Maui, she heard folks practicing for a festival. They were doing *kahiko* on the school grounds daily after school. They asked her back then in 1932 if she wanted to learn it, and she and another young teacher jumped at the chance. I guess I’m missing Mom and Dad and all my uncles and aunties, all gone now except for 86-year-old Uncle Billy on Tavares Bay on Hana Highway south of Lower Paia, Maui.

In 2010 there may well be a celebration of 100 years of ownership of the Kuau property of the Tavares family. This is where my dad grew up and he and his brother got “some lickin’” when their dad caught them blowing up the rocks in the bay with his dynamite so they could surf safely! The bay now is a popular local surfing spot!

For those of you who are lovers of Hawaiian music and hula, you should go to the website for the event, sometimes called the “Merry Monarch” of Southern California in reference to the huge contest in Hilo, Hawai‘i every year. Just go to: www.ehulamau.org. ■

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.

Steel Lessons Online with John Ely

John is now offering lessons using the free Skype video-conferencing program. You need a newer computer, a webcam, and broadband Internet. For more info go to www.hawaiiansteel.com/lessons/lessons.php or email John at johnely@hawaiiansteel.com. You can schedule a free test session to make sure everything works. Lessons are \$30 per hour and tailored to your playing level.

The Lane Vifinkle Story and CD

From Lorene Ruymnar

Lane used to be a steady attendee of our conventions. A really great bass player in addition to his steel guitar work. During that time he met a lady member who was available, and over several years they moved closer together until “bang” they couldn’t get any closer. Then they moved to a different city, and are now deeply involved in the Work of the Lord. So we haven’t seen them for perhaps ten years. She (Cheryl Vifinkle) sings on his recordings. Here’s Lane to share his story:

I grew up in the Netherlands. When I came to this country in 1958, I didn’t know one word of English (I now know five). While I did get compliments on how fast I was picking up English, I really don’t have any special language talent. I know some who are gifted in this area and I’m definitely not in their league. You see, talent is only one of the ingredients needed to successfully master a subject. Necessity and love for the subject are a couple others. In my case love for the subject was an overriding factor. Let me explain.

In the Netherlands during the war years there was no electricity, gas or water, and radios were illegal so all we heard were German marching songs, cold and harsh. We were liberated in May 1945 by American and Canadian troops. I was eleven years old. They looked so good, sounded so good, and played music like I never heard before. Wherever they came from must be like heaven and I wanted speak like that. So when I came to this country in 1958, I was more than eager to learn. I didn’t use my native language and translate, but like a baby from scratch. Which means you repeat everything you hear. That’s a very effective way. At the time I was a welder and that caliber of English, unfortunately, is not very high. Not knowing good from bad I repeated everything I heard. At conversations after church I may have said things like “the ‘blankity-blank’ gave a good sermon, didn’t he?” It took years before I understood the stares I got.

I did understand from the start that I would be a student of the English language for the rest of my life. Sort of like a recovering alcoholic who knows he has to work at it for the rest of his life. So, I listen to national newscasters say things like “we have obtained the original copy of this document” while everybody knows it has to be the original or a copy but it can’t be both. Another favorite is ‘hot water heater’. If the water is hot, why do you want to heat it? Or foot pedal. If a pedal is a lever operated by foot, then what’s a foot pedal. Or the expression ‘this is a true fact’. Is there any other kind? Or, ‘this is different than that’ instead of ‘different from’.

I could go on and on. And this is from people who make their living speaking English. Anyway, I can never stop

being in learning mode, and spelling in English will always be difficult. On top of that, I probably am the worst typist in the history of typing. I can honestly say that I love this country and feel fortunate to be living here these past 50 years. Although I’m aware of its shortcomings and problems, I feel that whoever is President does not determine my degree of happiness. Don’t get me started.

Anyway, I still want to sound like the Americans I heard right after the war, and I hate it when people hear me speak and ask, “Where were you born?” I remember my first experience with a foreign language. It was May 1940. The Netherlands were overrun by the Germans, and I couldn’t understand why I couldn’t understand them. My mother explained to me that they were speaking a foreign language. And I remember replying, “Isn’t that a problem when they go home and their own families will not be able to understand them?”

One more language story. In my early learning days in this country, some friends and I were visiting a family I had not met before. The wife kept calling her husband ‘honey’. I thought that was his name so I called him honey, too. I got looks like, “We all know what you are.” It took a lot of explaining.

I got involved in Hawaiian music first as a bass player in 1952 with a Hawaiian group in Holland called the Honolulu Minstrels. They fired the steel player and made me his successor solely on the fact that my dad had an old Phillips steel guitar in the attic that I had never touched before (a bad instrument). There was never any money for lessons, so I did the best I could, mainly by listening to Rudi Wairata and Jerry Byrd records, and I have been struggling ever since. The Honolulu Minstrels are still working today. Their steel player is Henk Braaksma.

The only music lessons I ever received came from Morty Corb a great bassist who played with all the great ones like Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong, and Frank Sinatra. He saw me play in Los Angeles during the mid-sixties and said, “You sound good, kid, but you’re doing it all wrong. Let me straighten you out.” He was my teacher, mentor, and friend until he passed away in 1966.

By the way, I want to thank Lorene for writing the article about the late Pat Gerow (Spring 2009 issue). His story fits so many musicians I have known. Of course, there are also musicians who have their ducks in a row, artistically and business-wise, but sometimes I suspect that when the Lord gives you extra talent in one area, He takes it away from another.

My all-time favorite 6-string steel player was Rudi Wairata. I met him a few times. He was a very kind person, and probably had the most general music knowledge of all steel guitarists. But he had zero business sense. When he passed away in 1981, he was penniless. The Dutch Hawaiian music guru Gerhard Dillen let him stay at his house the last

Continued on Page 20

Hawaiian Paradise

(Harry Owens)

Ballad – C6th Tuning

Arrangement by John Ely

Intro

Am7 D7 G E dim D7

E
C
A
G
E
C

T
A
B

Vs

G G#dim D7 Am7 D7 Am7 D7

G F#7 G G G#dim D7 Am7

D7 Am7 D7 G C G

Listen to audio version, if available, at: www.hsga.org/Lessons/QuarterlyAudio.html

Br

C G

7 7 6 7 | 5 7 0 0 | 2 2 2 | 2

G E_m A₇ A_m7 C_m6 D₇

2 2 3 3 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 2 3 2

G G[#]dim D₇ A_m7 D₇

2 2 2 | 2 3 4 | 2 2 | 2 2

A_m7 D₇ G B^bdim A_m7 F^{Maj}7 G^{Maj}7

3 4 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 6 6 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 2 2 2 2 | 2 2 2 2

rake w/ thumb, end w/ finger

HSGA Spotlight – Kay Koster

From Paul Warnik

Kay Koster is a longtime HSGA member who is familiar to most everyone in the club. She is a faithful Joliet and Winchester attendee and has graced the stage with her great steel guitar playing and homespun humor. But not everyone knows that music has been a most important part of her life since an early age.

Born in Peshtigo, Wisconsin, Kay began studying the piano at age ten under the tutelage of Ms. Anna Papon who was originally from the Leipzig Conservatory in Germany. When Kay first took up the Hawaiian steel guitar, she taught herself by an interesting method. Kay explains, “I used a player piano and would put the music rolls on it and have them play slowly. Then I would match the sounds of the player piano with the notes on my first guitar (a Stella acoustic).” Kay would later play a Kay model (how appropriate!) with a D’Armond pickup and then a Supro-National electric.

By this time Kay had moved to Merinette, Wisconsin and was taking lessons from Mr. Ralph Schultz at the Honolulu Conservatory right before the onset of World War II (1940). Kay purchased the Honolulu Conservatory from Mr. Schultz and began teaching students of her own.

In 1945 Kay moved to her current hometown of Rockford, Illinois and began studying with her mentor on Hawaiian and Spanish guitars, Mr. Clinton Voigt who operated music studios in Beloit, Wisconsin, Elgin, Illinois, and Rockford. By 1946 Kay was teaching up to 90 students a week at the Voigt studios. That same year during a guitar competition at the Illinois State Fair, Kay would meet another teacher who would go on to become not only a dear friend but fierce



Kay Koster, self-described “recycled teenager,” posing smartly with her National double-neck steel guitar circa 1952. Wow!

competitor, that being HSGA member Evelyn Brue from Ottawa, Illinois. At the same competition Kay would also meet two other respected guitar instructors, Ray Gaitsch who taught the Alkire method and Jack Moore who taught the Oahu method. Both Ray and Jack were HSGA members until they passed away.

In 1948 while at a guitar competition sponsored by the American Guild of Banjoists, Mandolinists, and Guitarists in Buffalo, New York, Kay first met legendary virtuoso performer and teacher Letritia Kandle of Chicago who was judging the contestants. Even though Kay was already teaching, Evelyn urged her to take advanced lessons in Hawaiian guitar and music composition from Letritia at her Modern Guitar Studios in downtown Chicago as she had done.

For the next four years Kay would make the two-hour trip from Rockford to Chicago for her weekly lesson with Letritia. During bad weather days Kay would take the train instead of driving. Says Kay, “I had to walk a couple of blocks of skid row from the train station. I was carrying a double-neck National and all the while having to keep looking back over my shoulder.” After a few more blocks of walking she would arrive at Letritia’s studio in the Kimball building, which was situated in a more respectable area of the Wabash Avenue music district.

It was during one of Kay’s weekly lessons with Letritia that she saw one of the most famous musicians of the day come into the studio for some assistance, none other than legendary drummer and band leader Gene Krupa. “Lettie, I’m having trouble with one of my drum solos,” he said. Kay observed Letritia sight reading through the score of Krupa’s written arrangement in question and after a few pages she found the problem section and penciled in the needed corrections.

Kay Koster (right) posing with her pupils at the International Music League (IML) competition at Baldwin-Wallace College, July 1953.



While she started learning steel guitar in the A major tuning, Kay tunes her triple-neck Fender Stringmaster to C6th, E7th, and C# minor. Says Kay, “I love Fender amps but when it comes to steel guitars, I like the tone of Nationals more than Fender.” Despite the sound preference she usually plays her Fender because it is lighter to carry. Kay further noted, “When I visited the Hawaiian Islands almost all the players used Nationals, especially the gray pearloid Chicagoan model.”

By 1956 Kay’s studio was located just two blocks down the street from another music store owned by Ralph Nielsen who was the father of guitarist Rick Nielsen of the world renown rock and roll band Cheap Trick from Rockford. Kay explained that if the Nielsen’s store ran out of stock on a particular music item, she would get it to them, and they would do the same for her. Later, after gaining fame and fortune, Rick came to Kay because he was writing a book and wanted old vintage Gibson, Martin, and Washburn catalogs that Kay had.

These days Kay stays busy teaching guitar to 29 students from her home studio, some of whom compete annually in the Illinois Guitar League, which Kay founded in 1971. Sadly, Kay only has one steel guitar student, a senior lady. When I asked Kay for her thoughts on why the popularity of steel guitar had diminished, she said, “The Elvis Presley era began the decline in steel guitar students.” In December 2007 Kay was honored by NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) with the inclusion of an interview with her in the NAMM “Library of 1000 Interviews” of influential music merchants. Congratulations, Kay! ■

Lion’s Lock Lever Steel Guitar

About twenty years ago Japan steel ace Kiyoshi “Lion” Kobayashi ordered a special Excel steel guitar manufactured by Mitsuo “Fuzzy” Fujii, which was designed to provide a broad palette of sounds with only a single 10-string neck. Five lock levers would each provide a different tuning by raising and lowering select strings, and the lock levers could be used in combination—much like the pedals on a pedal steel guitar—to provide almost limitless tuning possibilities. This custom made Hawaiian steel guitar was catalogued in Lorene’s book “The Hawaiian Steel Guitar and Its Great Hawaiian Musicians.”

Throughout the years Mitsuo improved the lock lever system and Lion now has a special prototype Excel lock lever Hawaiian steel, which he demoed at Scotty’s St. Louis convention this year. The instrument, a single-neck 8-stringer with 8 lock levers, is still in the testing phase, however, and production date and price are still unknown.

Lion says two to three levers can be changed simultaneously during one measure of music if the song isn’t too fast.



Kiyoshi Kobayashi’s lock-lever steel guitar built by Mitsuo Fujii.

So for example, you could play a double vamp in the C tuning, switch to E13th for the second chorus, switch to B11 for the third chorus, then finish up with a chorus in C13 and an ending section in Cmaj7!

Referring to the diagram shown below, here are a few of the lock lever combinations Kiyoshi routinely uses:

- Levers 1 + 2 = Cmaj7 add 6—often used for intros and endings. Jules played “Hi’ilawe” on this tuning.
- Levers 1 + 3 = C6th or Am7
- Levers 1 + 2 + 3 = C13th—the most popular tuning in Hawaiian music.
- Lever 4 = E7th—one of the oldest tunings.
- Lever 5 = E9—more jazzy than the E7th tuning.
- Levers 4 + 6 = C#m + E7—similar to what Andy Iona used in “Vana Vana” and “Tahu Wahu Wai.”
- Levers 5 + 6 = E13th—Jules Ah See’s “Paradise Isle” and backup playing.
- Levers 7 + 8 = B11th—Jules Ah See’s “Sand” and “How D’ya Do.”
- Levers 5 + 8 = E13th + 11—this tuning is a transposition of the G13th used in “Manuela Boy.” ■

1	G			F#	F#			G#	
2	E								
3	B		C			C#		C#	
4	G#	A						A	
5	F#	G		E					
6	D#	E		D	D				
7	B	C							
8	G#		Bb	A				A	
9	E		G					F#	
10	B		C	C					
	Lever	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

CLOSING NOTES

Ray Gaitsch

We recently received this sad news from member David Gaitsch: "I wanted to let you know that my father, Ray Gaitsch, passed away last Monday evening (August 3). He certainly loved the steel guitar. In fact, he taught me how to play the E-Harp when I was a kid. Unfortunately, I gave it up to play rock 'n' roll on Spanish guitar. I have attended the last two Joliet conventions. We were starting to rehearse the set we were going to perform for you folks. Please let all of his friends know, okay?"

Longtime music store proprietor and instructor Evelyn Brue-Roeder from Ottawa, Illinois writes: "It was so sad to hear that our dear friend, musician Ray Gaitsch, has passed away. Ray and I shared the stage many times with our students in competition. I especially remember the many times we competed at the Illinois State Fair. They had the best judges available and a beautiful air-conditioned building to compete in. Sometimes I remember us seeing each other on the highway heading for Springfield. We both had good students. I can still visualize the look of pride on his face as his students were doing very well on stage. He was so dedicated. I will remember him always. We had a nice talk about old times at the 2008 Joliet Convention."

This from Michael Lee Allen: "I just got a phone call from Chicago informing me that Ray Gaitsch has died. Ray was one of the first ten teachers franchised to teach the Eddie Alkire E-Harp system. He and his late partner Elmer Herrick operated several El Rey Music Center stores and teaching studios in Chicago and the west and northwest suburbs over the years. He taught guitar, steel guitar including E9th pedal steel, and mandolin. I started out with Ray when I was ten and just turned sixty so I can say I knew him for a half century. I've met hundreds of people he taught, those who worked for him in the store as sales help or assistant teachers, his sales reps, and vendors. *Not one* person ever had a bad word for Ray and I can say he's the only person I've ever known that I can say that about."

Year after year Ray Gaitsch and Elmer Herrick produced prize-winning soloists and orchestras at the El Rey Music Center. He will be missed here at HSGA and in the greater Chicagoland music community.

Robert Barry

More sad news came to us from James Ferguson. Hawai'i member Robert R. Barry passed away on June 27, 2009. At the funeral service, his steel guitar instructor Ronald Kanahele played several musical melodies and gave a very loving eulogy praising his devotion to the steel guitar. It was one of his life enjoyments. Jim was Bob's best friend and executor of his estate. ■



Ray Gaitsch (back row, 3rd from the left) posing with one of his fine groups representing Chicago's El Rey Music Center.

European Steel Guitar Hall of Fame Launches

From Lorene Ruymar

Have you any interest in hearing about the newly formed European Steel Guitar Hall of Fame? European players all too often do not get the recognition they deserve; perhaps that's about to change.

Here's their mission statement: "The European Steel Guitar Hall of Fame project is one of the most important initiatives to promote the steel guitar in Europe. By giving recognition to those who have contributed most and telling their story we will inspire all steel guitarists and attract new devotees. The history of the steel guitar in Europe is a story of many people from many lands particularly from Hawai'i and the U.S. but also one of talent, from the many countries of Europe, which has not been given due recognition."

The induction ceremony will be held annually in September at the Chanos International Steel Guitar Festival in Chanos-Curson, France. The first will be on the 19th of September, 2009. The first inductees to be recognized are:

Gordon Huntley, U.K.
Rod King, U.K.
Sarah Jory, U.K.
Gino Bordin, France
Harry Hougassian, France
Jean-Yves Lozac'h, France
Frank Baum, Germany
Theo Ehrlicher, The Netherlands
Rudi Wairata, The Netherlands ■

Ken Emerson Sighting!

by Lorene Ruymar

There was a knock on the door. We opened it, and in came a huge lemon pie. What would *you* do in that case? Just what we did. We got the forks out and started chewing on it. As the pie mountain reduced in size, we became aware that someone was sitting on the other side of it. What a way to start a week of fun and great music!

Yeah, Ken Emerson visited us for a week in mid-August, and his way of starting the party was bringing along that pie. "The pie that almost ate Vancouver," as Ken put it, "but we saved the town, didn't we?"

I'm sure you steel guitar lovers don't want to hear about the mountains we climbed and the puddles we paddled over, showing Ken around the town. You just want to hear about the big night when we called all our music-loving buddies together to share and enjoy.

We have a favorite restaurant where we hold all our music parties. It's the Jade Rabbit Palace, believe it or not, where Art and I used to play the dinner hour music every Friday and Saturday night when we were young and foolish.

You've all met John Kamoe Fatiaki. Aside from being a great steel player, Kamoe's always there to back up whoever on whatever. And John's son Johnny plus wife Anita also dropped in for a short stay. Johnny's nearly as talented as his dad, and a comedian besides. He and Anita did a short performance on their way to their *real* gig. Kamoe's nephew Homer Bentley, another extremely talented player of everything, couldn't get time off from his work in the oil fields of Fort McMurray to be with us. But a group of 'ukulele players from the Vanukes Club did get there with strings itching to be tickled. Jean Dyck, who used to play the steel in her hubby's country dance band, played some lovely solos for us. Her hubby Bill listened from somewhere above the clouds. Michael Dunn surprised us. He's usually off touring with Bob Brozman, but there he was playing his 6-string acoustic steel guitar for us in a manner that made everyone in the audience want to learn to play, too. Michael doesn't just play them, he builds 'em and fixes 'em, too. A luthier, right?

Did I forget to say that Art Ruymar and Myself Ruymar also did our usual schtick? And so did Ron Thompson, singer and rhythm player in the town's big Dal Richards Dance Band. Ken Emerson sure knows how to get the fun happening. He told us that he only knows one steel guitar tuning and "proved" it by picking up every other steel guitar in the room and playing it joyfully, no matter how it was tuned. How does he *do* that??

All good times must come to an end, sorry to say. One day Ken drove off to search for more giant lemon pies on his way to his next gigs in the towns of the Pacific Northwest.



Ken Emerson, back from Europe, sporting his National tri-cone.

He vacated the bedroom where Jerry Byrd once slept, and where the sheets have never been changed. Said Ken on taking leave, "You know, Jerry and I communicated downstairs. He says I still need a volume pedal with my Gibson EH-150. Oh well, I'm so old school."

Thus ends the story of the steel guitarist that came and nearly never left... until the beer ran out. ■

Please Contact Us!

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

Treasurer's Report

(Totals from Don Weber as of September 30, 2009)

General Fund

FHB Checking	\$23,085.38
OTSEFCU* Regular Shares	\$811.75
OTSEFCU* CD #480	\$5,467.08
Total General Fund	\$29,364.21

Scholarship Fund

FHB Checking	\$10,502.72
OTSEFCU* CD	\$10,934.17
Total Scholarship Fund	\$21,436.89

Joliet Checking	\$3,857.77
Japan Account	\$2,291.86

Grand Total **\$56,950.73**

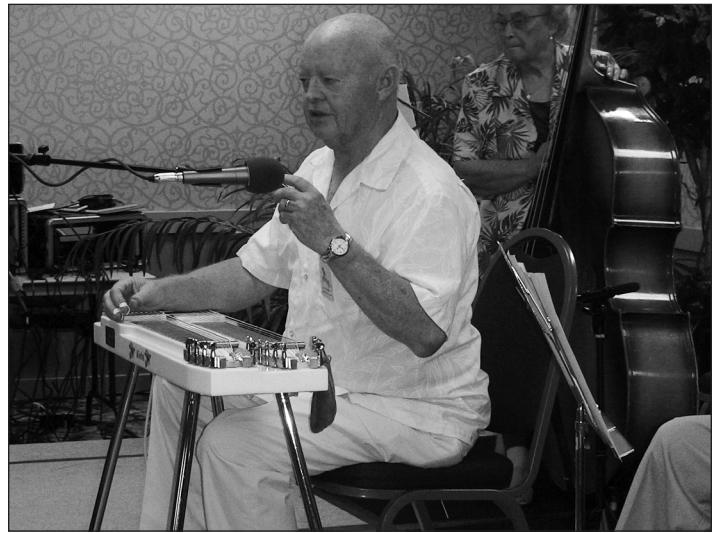
*O'ahu Transit Svcs. Employee Fed. Credit Union



Joliet 2009 Off-Stage

(Clockwise from upper left) Michigan regulars Mae and Art Lang who are keeping the Alkire system alive; retired pilot and Board member Ivan Reddington with cohort Dee Ryan; “bellying up” to the bar at the Saturday Night Lū’au, Peg and Wally Pfeifer with Bo’ Bahret and new member Jamie O’Connell; Donna and Dick Lloyd from Glendora, California (looks like Rhetta Riggs in back); and a uke jam with Greg Wong (left) and vendor John Hatton. Too bad we didn’t get any shots of the “no sleep” jams this year, where a lot of the real learning goes on.





Joliet 2009 On-Stage

(Clockwise from upper left) Guest artist John Ely now from Northern Minnesota playing his Fender Deluxe 8; Phil Bender who always has a unique take on our instrument; bassist Virginia Grzadzinski stepping out on steel guitar and cutting up with Gerald Ross (left), Dick Martiny, and Bernice Honold behind her; Ontario musician par excellence Ian Ufton playing his pedal steel guitar with—you guessed it—Virginia and Dick on backup; and a new face at Joliet, Cecil Brasiel from Casper, Wyoming with Board member Chris Kennison on Fender bass.



DISC 'N' DATA



“Hula Island Style” – Various Artists (Keala Records, SKCD1223)

Review by John Ely

“Hula Island Style” is living proof that even today you can breathe new life into the most played Hawaiian standards. Greg Sardinha’s latest release on his Keala label has some beautifully crafted background vocals and interesting arrangements.

Another thing I liked: Many Hawaiian CDs produced today—too many—use excessive reverb throughout. This CD tones it down and creates an ambient but not intrusive gloss.

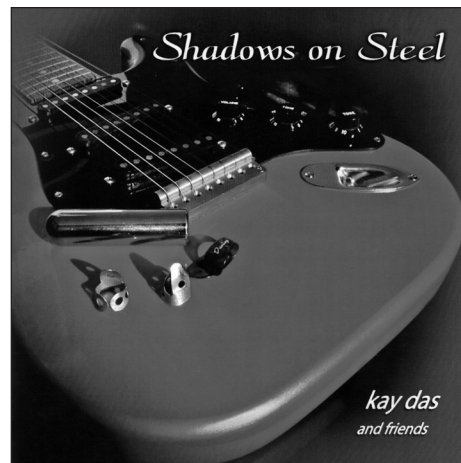
Gary Aiko and Ha’alilio Heyer turn in fine vocal performances. Greg is his usual innovative self on steel guitar whether it’s a choice intro, solo, or fill around the vocal. It’s particularly nice to hear Ha’a Heyer on disc. He is one of those Waikīkī jewels who has not been sufficiently recorded. Ha’a turns in sweet versions of “Kalua,” “My Isle of Golden Dreams” and “Sea Breeze.”

A quick rundown: Greg plays some flashy open-string lines in “Hukilau.” Gary Aiko nails “Sweet Leilani,” a sweet and unusual arrangement with terrific background vocals. More of the same in “Little Grass Shack” with super nice fill-in work by Greg. “Tiny Bubbles” gets a new lease on life in a cool calypso setting. Check out the

cascading steel guitar harmonics that frame “Honolulu City Lights.” Gary Aiko is superb as always on “I’ll Remember You,” “Waikīkī,” and “Blue Hawaii.” “Lahaina Luna” features some very creative background vocals and some nice arrangement twists.

Bottom line: “Hula Island Style” is a winner with refreshing versions of classic *hapa haole* standards.

You can order the CD online at many Hawaiian music websites such as mele.com. You can also email Greg at kealarecords@yahoo.com or write Keala Records, 1605 Ulupūi Place, Kailua, HI 96734. .



“Shadows on Steel,” Kay Das, KD-1010

Review by John Ely

I heard Kay Das for the first time at Joliet this year. He loves playing steel guitar whether it’s performing on stage, jamming until dawn, or formulating his musical ideas on CD. It’s apparent that he hears steel guitar on almost anything, including areas most steel players would not venture into. Kay has the CD listed on CD Baby as an easy-listening pop instrumental release; this is not a traditional Hawaiian steel guitar recording.

One thing’s sure, Kay knows how to arrange in a host of musical settings and he makes good use of standard guitar, keyboard and keyboard-based string pads and section riffs, pro-

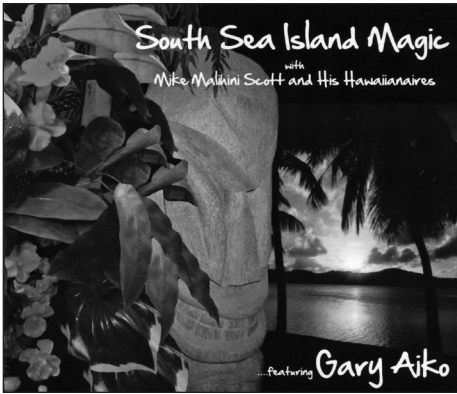
grammed drums, and, yes, steel guitar! My point is that he’s not trying to make a normal solo steel guitar record. He’s making a CD that goes wherever his musical inclinations take him, and steel guitar is one of the tools he uses to achieve his desired effect.

Included on the CD is a nostalgic film score-type piece “South Pacific Medley,” the Abba tune “Andante, Andante,” a Sidney Bechet tune “Petite Fleur,” an Indo-European modal adventure “Arabian Sunset,” an Andrew Lloyd Webber selection from ‘The Phantom of the Opera’, “The Music of the Night,” and several tunes on the CD with a surf sensibility: “Peacepipe,” “Cosy 2008,” and “Midnight.” In fact the title of the CD, “Shadows on Steel,” is actually a reference to the ‘surf and twang’ British band from the 1960s, the Shadows.

Other CD cuts include “Cavatina 2008” based on the theme of the movie “Deer Hunter”; the exotic “Indian Pacific”; “Cosy 008,” kind of a modern-day “Sleepwalk”; “Night in Tahiti” with some pop and country-ish steel; an Indonesian tune, “Sarinande”; a pot-pourri of steel guitar textures on the Buddy Holly tune “Heartbeat”; “Temptation,” a sort of “Adventures in Paradise” gone exotica; “La Comparsa,” a Cuban sketch from the composer of “Malaguena”; “September Song”; and “Hawaiian Wedding Song.”

Kay tackles the impossible with regularity in “Shadows on Steel.” In tough passages, he doesn’t always land on his feet, but again I credit Kay for his fearlessness in what he takes on musically. Coming through is the same exuberance you see when you meet him for the first time.

To order the CD, search on ‘Kay Das’ at www.cdbaby.com. Or you can order direct at: Kay Das, 20 Senisa Way, Irvine, CA 92612; Tel: 714-600-2232; Email: kaydas@mac.com. Price of the CD including shipping and handling is \$15 in the U.S. Contact Kay for prices elsewhere.



“South Sea Island Magic” – Mike Scott, Gary Aiko (M.A. Scott Recordings, MAS-CD801)

Review by John Ely

I begin most CD reviews confident that I’ll recognize most of the material. On Mike Scott’s latest release “South Sea Island Magic,” however, there were half a dozen tunes that threw me, tunes that *sounded* like standards. Well, it turns out Mike wrote them! The originals include “The Lights of Old Honolulu”; “Hello and Aloha”; “South Sea Surf” with lovely chord changes that Mike navigates beautifully with his Multi-Kord steel guitar; “I Left My Heart in Tahiti”; “Sweet Pikake Lei”; “That Hula Swing,” an instrumental with steel, clarinet, sax, trumpet, and uke solos and a rousing Dixieland section at the end; and “The Tropic Nights, the Harbor Lights and You.” The tunes are well written and add a valuable dimension to the CD.

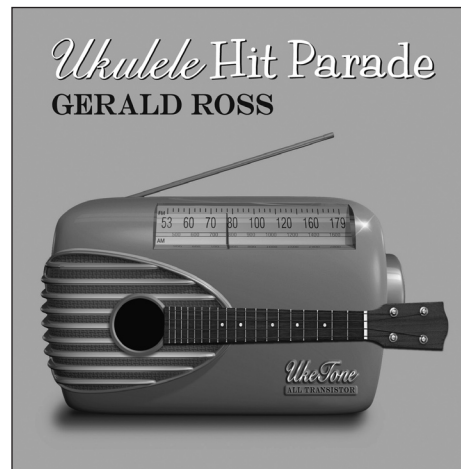
Gary Aiko is featured on the CD and entirely lives up to his billing as Vocalist in Chief. Unlike the previous release, which largely featured steel guitar in a big band setting, most of the tracks on this release have a more traditional small group sound.

The steel guitar on the CD is constant reminder that less is more, and Mike gives a clinic on “picking your spots” in the context of a larger arrangement. Mike also demonstrates that classic “strum and slide” sound that is deceptively simple and so effective.

Other tunes on the CD include the title track “South Sea Island Magic” with a surprise big band entrance half-way through; “Akaka Falls”; “Hawaiian Paradise,” with that sweet strum style Mike uses throughout the CD; “Pua Maeole”; “Waikiki”; and “A Million Moons” with beautiful fill-in work, possibly the best track on the CD.

If you’re a Mike Scott or Gary Aiko fan, or can’t resist a well-delivered romantic *hapa haole* tune, “South Sea Magic” is for you!

The price of the CD is \$15, shipping included, to anywhere in North America, to the U.K., 10 Pounds. Send payment to: Mike Scott, 45c Chestnut Park Road, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 1W7, Canada. For more info email him at ma_scott100@hotmail.com or go to www.hawaiianaires.com.



“Ukulele Hit Parade” – Gerald Ross (UkeTone, UT-CD2303)

Review by Bill Leff

HSGA Webmaster Gerald Ross’s latest offering, “Ukulele Hit Parade”, features a mix of fifteen songs made popular from the ‘30s to the ‘60s. As with his previous three albums, Gerald plays all the instruments, this time with an emphasis on the ‘ukulele. But don’t worry steel guitar fans, there’s plenty of that here for us, too! And, as before, he does not confine himself to a specific musical genre; he covers choice

pop, rock and roll, and jazz tunes of the period that fit well with his expert but easy-going style.

The album opens with a gently loping version of Benny Goodman’s “A Smo-o-th One” with Gerald playing the melody on ‘ukulele and providing counterpoint on his 1954 Fender Champion steel guitar along with rhythm guitar backup. He solos on uke and steel with equal proficiency—if you’ve heard Gerald you know he is a true “triple threat” on steel guitar, ‘ukulele, and Spanish guitar.

Gerald uses the same uke-steel-Spanish guitar instrumentation on several songs, including “Sleepwalk,” “Sabor A Mi,” “One Mint Julep,” “The Gypsy,” and my favorite of these, a swinging version of “Canadian Sunset.” Several of these are played on his 1947 Rickenbacker BD-6.

My personal favorites are where the solo ‘ukulele is featured, such as Del Shannon’s “Runaway,” Bob Crewe’s “Music to Watch Girls By,” and Josef Zawinul’s “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy.” For me, this is where Gerald’s artistry really shines as both arranger and player. His tone on ‘ukulele is bright and clear and at times could be mistaken for a nylon string guitar. Moreover, Gerald has developed a unique finger picked style that makes it sound like there are several instruments accompanying him when in fact it’s just him and the four strings of his uke (the UkeTone motto is ‘Four Strings Are Plenty!’). He uses this technique with great effect to propel “Apache” and “Run-away” rhythmically. It is a revelation to hear these songs adapted for solo ‘ukulele so effectively.

Whether you are a fan of the ‘ukulele or not, I know you will enjoy “Ukulele Hit Parade.” The preferred method to order the CD is via Gerald’s website at ‘www.geraldross.com’. Or you can send a check (U.S. funds only) or money order for \$14.95 to Gerald Ross, P.O. Box 3245, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. ■

E Komo Mai! Welcome, New Members

Is your address correct? Please notify us!

UNITED STATES

RONALD BAUGHER, 4222 Black Oak Dr., Lisle, IL 60532

KEITH BAUMANN, 196 North Larch Ave., Elmhurst, IL 60126

JOHN HAMILTON, 245 W. 104th St. #3A, New York, NY 10025

JONATHAN NEHER, P.O. Box 1001, 38513 Jasper-Lowell Rd., Fall Creek, OR 97438

MARC REAGAN PRUETT, 390 Mosey Mountain Lane, Canton, NC 28716

K.J. AND KAY TUCKER, 6989 Palm Road, Sealy, TX 77474

CANADA AND OVERSEAS

NEIL CAMERON, 8 Belfry Gardens, Cantley Manor, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN4 6TS U.K.

TERRA MARTIN, 1145 Greenwood Ave., Toronto, ON M4J 4E7 Canada

LANE VIFINKLE Continued from Page 9

part of his life when he was very ill. To my knowledge there is still no marker on his grave today. A very sad story. I remember in 1956 when I was just starting out as a steel player, Rudi Wairata wanted my band, the Honolulu Minstrels, to fulfill a contract he had with an operetta company to play on their tour during intermission. That didn't seem right to me and sure enough, the company's president declared, "Nothing doing. Rudi *will* play."

George de Fretes had migrated to the states and lived in the Los Angeles area. The Indonesian community loved him, and he played at all their club parties. That didn't pay enough money to live on, so he was poor, too. In 1981, he had a heart attack and died. There was no money for a funeral, and for days no one claimed his body. Some friends heard about the situation and raised the money for a funeral. They even arranged for him to be buried next to his idol, Sol Ho'opi'i, but he came within hours of being stuffed in a cardboard box and buried with the homeless. As soon as his other "friends" found out the funeral was paid for, they all showed up at the funeral...even the Indonesian counsel with his own camera man for a "photo opportunity." This

is especially ironic if you consider that he was forced to leave Indonesia as a stowaway on an ocean liner because he was considered a Dutch sympathizer and therefore an enemy of the state. An interesting side note: A representative from the Phillips Recording Company traveled to Egypt to get on board that ship to have him sign a recording contract before anyone else could. My, how times have changed!

These days Cheryl and I perform in churches, hospitals, prisons, and for money. I consider myself a bassist first, steel guitarist second, and "wannabee" singer third. I love writing harmony arrangements for vocal groups and I am tickled pink when two real singers let me sing the third part with them.

I am involved with a music mentoring program for high schools. My area is jazz upright bass. I see kids with considerable talent, but I wonder if most might be better off not using music for their main income but for enjoyment.

"One-Person Hawaiian Band" CD

First of all, the CD "One-Person Hawaiian Band" is just that, one person. There is nobody else on it. Some of the cuts on it go back to the 1980s. And some were recorded last year. The earlier ones were re-mastered in digital format.

The steel guitars used include a 6-string Fender, a 6-string Multi-Kord (Harlin Brothers), a Century "Singing Guitar" and a Fender 400 with 8 strings and 5 pedals. So far as tone is concerned, the Century "Singing Guitar" and the Multi-Kord are my favorites. For its time, the Multi-Kord had an ingenious pedal design. However, the mechanism didn't always allow the string to return to its original pitch. So, you keep on doing takes until the guitar "gets it right," which is only feasible if you own the studio (which I did). For that reason, I don't think I played the Multi-Kord live anywhere.

I started with multi-track recording in the late '80s on a Fostex 8-channel recorder using quarter-inch tape. At that time my thoughts were "Lord, if you give me a machine like that. I will never ask for anything else as long as I live." Today, I still have that recorder in a closet somewhere and literally cannot give it away. Oh, how time and equipment change!

Today I still offer analog recording for dyed-in-the-wool analog fanatics using a Fostex 24-channel machine with one-inch tape. The rappers are required to clean up their act, and that usually weeds them out.

The "Hawaiian Spirit" CD was done several years ago before Bonnie McGowan (Cheryl's sister) had all her grandchildren and was more available. Every once in a while she still sings with us. I like three-part harmony better than two-part. It was originally a cassette with gospel music on side A and Hawaiian music on side B.

Lorene again. Lane did an amazing job of playing all the instruments on the CD, a project worthy of Rudi Wairata himself in my humble opinion. To order the CD, contact Lane at One Person Hawaiian Band, Creative Recording Studio (AIM), 2020 Okeechobee Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80915; Tel: 719-596-3539; Email: vifinkle@comcast.net. The price of the CD is \$10 (U.S. dollars, please). ■