



The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

"all the places they have been to, all the things they have seen"

On the Road

There were stops last month in **California** and **North Carolina**. At the end of the month the band played a benefit in NC for Jan Johansson. A noted musician and instructor, the benefit was in support of a needed heart transplant. **Sugar Grove, Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove** festival in early July. Doc Watson will be there, and the Krugers will join him on stage. Then, after a stop in **Johnson City, Tennessee**, they'll be back close to home for some shows in NC as well as a concert in the open-air at the Blue Ridge Music centre in **Galax**. ►



In the News

Double Time Music has added an **online shop** featuring in-press CDs, DVDs, and apparel. The shop is available from the link on the Kruger homepage. • On the 15th of May the band was featured on Nashville Public Radio's **Bluegrass Breakdown** with Dave Higgs. • In early June, Jens joined **The Waybacks** in Chattanooga in a version of the Merelfest Album Hour, this year presenting the Beatles' *Abbey Road* in its entirety. The show featured a symphony orchestra, Jens, and Joan Osborne and John Cowan on vocals. In a glowing review, one critic noted his only criticism was that "Jens Kruger wasn't spotlighted as much as I would have liked." (John Wilson, *Chatanooga*) • Two titles from the Kruger backlist, *Behind the Barn* and *Behind the Barn Volume 2* are now available in download from **iTunes**. • Plans are underway for added dates in NC as well as a trip west in the fall of this year. Dates are still being added; email Joel at joel@krugerbros.com with venue or event suggestions. ►



Jens and Bobby Hicks! Uwe took this shot during a show, literally between the notes. A good friend, Hicks has retired from touring but nevertheless makes time to play with the Kruger Brothers at every opportunity, either on Jens' porch or in concert, as here, just outside Asheville, NC.

Kruger Brothers, Deering Banjos and Taylor Guitars aid school programs

On June 11th, a full house packed a benefit concert held at Cuyamaca College to support shop programs at local high schools. Deering Banjo and Taylor Guitar sponsored the concert in benefit of the industrial arts programs in the East County school district of San Diego. These programs gave both Bob Taylor and Greg Deering their first opportunities to build their lutherie skills. The concert featured The Kruger Brothers and Taylor Guitar virtuoso Doyle Dykes.

"The evening was wonderful," says Uwe, "we got to play with Doyle and his daughter Haley."

Since they began, the benefits have helped raise more than \$350,000 to support shop classes, teachers, and students.

"Courage" Goes to #1



Si Kahn's album "Courage" was the top album of May 2010 at Folk Alliance

International. The org charts what folk DJs have been

playing each month. Si also hit #1 on the artist list, charting above Willie Nelson, Jackson Brown, and Mary Chapin Carpenter. Released this spring, produced by Jens and featuring his arrangements and instrumentation, the CD is a collection of songs about real people, many of whom Si met through this work organizing. "It's a thank you to everyone from whom I learned who courage means," he says. "There is a reason I start [the CD] with a song about a Labrador retriever who thinks he can fly. Because one of the ways we can live this life richly is by attempting the impossible." For the chart, click on <http://www.folkalliance.org/FolkDJChart/tabid/85/Default.aspx>

First Person Singular:***Uwe on writing songs:
how he began, and why he
keeps going***

“Writing songs is a double edged sword for me. In one way I think that most of the good songs are already written ... on the other hand, there are certain things that I want to sing about that I don’t find any songs for. I started writing songs when I was in my 20s. It was a way for me to learn the language and to have a deeper understanding of the English language. I’m a big fan of the English language, in a way ... German is a very strict language, but in English you can work more to paint pictures.

“I did workshops back in Switzerland at a festival. They approached me and asked if I wanted to be part of this singer/songwriter festival up in the mountains, and I said, yeah, I’d like to do that. So they gave me a tent and then I had workshops with the artists that came to the festival. I had people at my workshops like Brooks and Dunn, Kris Kristofferson. They would come to perform at the festival, and then I would have them in my tent. Since I had to translate the questions, I pretty much made up all the questions myself, and so at least once a year I had this incredible lesson in how to write songs.

“One of the things I learned from Kris Kristofferson is that you should just write as much as possible—that it’s an art like playing music, you have to practice. He said, don’t expect to come out with anything that makes sense until you’ve written about a thousand songs. And so I took that advice, and I’ve been writing songs and throwing most of them away. I write 10 songs and 9 of them I don’t even finish. Some times I get something and I think, ‘well, this might make sense.’ I take it over to Jens’ house and then we work on it, he helps me put the melody to it. ... and then we’ve found this wonderful way of putting little snippets in between. Some of Jens’ compositions are more

complex—as opposed to folk songs which can be pretty bare—but what we try to do is write the song, make it not too complicated, but instead of having a solo that runs over the melody or the chorus, we put like a separate complimentary composition between the verses and the chorus. Like in “Carolina in the Fall,” there’s a riff instead of a straight solo. I get to play the solo after the riff, but it gives the song a different quality. I don’t have to write as many words because I know that Jens’ composition will enhance the words that I wrote and give them a direction. This way of writing songs is very satisfying because we get to make something completely new. I really like that aspect of what we do.”

On the Web

Learn clawhammer with Jens beginning with the first of three video lessons sponsored by Deering Banjo:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6818YNRU7BU&feature=related>

WoodSongs show 567 features The Kruger Brothers and is available in audio or video podcast at:

<http://www.woodsongs.com/showlist.asp>

“Appalachian Mist” sung in French at the Cook Shack:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aArI2kqBc4>

**Another Great Year
in Branson!**

Each year thousands of people come out to see the band at Silver Dollar City in Branson, including members of the fan club who dropped in from Oklahoma. The Krugers played 15 shows in a row, and packed the house with 800 people at every show. “There are a lot of people who plan their vacations around the performances,” says Uwe. “There are people from all over the world who meet in the line to the Kruger show,” many of whom come back show after show. “It’s a wonderful time.” Uwe says that, across all the shows, they only repeated 6 or 8 songs. Amazing.

**Jens’ New Banjo!**

Silver plated, including the tone ring, carved heel, details all over the place. Uwe calls this a “really a special banjo.” It’s one of a kind as well. Jens developed the banjo with Greg Deering, and it’s the first Eagle II to be completely overhauled to Jens’ specs. It has no lacquer, just a slightly stained, linseed oil finish. Greg himself did the carving on the heel. ►



The Krüger Brothers Newsletter is edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca To subscribe or unsubscribe, visit www.krugerbrothers.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things they have seen"

On the Road

The Krugers have been spending some time closer to home lately, with shows at **Sugar Grove**, **Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove** as well as a show at the **Blue Ridge Music Centre** in **Galax**. On July 24 they provided the concluding concert a series "Blue Ridge Traditions" offered by the **Mountain Gateway Museum and Heritage Center** in **Old Fort, NC**. On August 7 they're at the **Steckoah Valley Centre**, as part of the Appalachian Evening Summer Concert series. A big gig coming up in September: **The Mountain Song Festival** in **Brevard, NC**, is an annual benefit for the Boys & Girls Club of Transylvania County, NC. The festival takes place the weekend of September 10. They'll be there on the Saturday along with the Jerry Douglas Band, Darrell Scott, the Steep Canyon Rangers, and others. ►



In the News

Two new CDs are set to release this fall: a **Christmas with the Kruger Brothers** will feature new recordings of old favorites as well as some surprise twists, too (it is a Krugers album after all); October will also see the release of a **Best Of** CD. (See article this page) • If that isn't enough to satisfy your Kruger jones, you also have a chance to own a real piece of Kruger history: the last copies of **Appalachian Barn Orchestra** will be sold off on the Kruger's online store (see the homepage for the link to the store). • On July 24 the KB played for an audience that included North Carolina **senator Richard Burr**. • The new **recording studio** is nearly complete, and it will see a grand opening this fall. ►



Joel and Doc at Sugar Grove along with Richard Watson and Charles Welch. This year marks Joel's 20th anniversary with the Kruger Brothers.

Send a list of your favorite KB songs ... and win a CD!

There are going to be 20 songs on the upcoming **Best Of The Kruger Brothers CD** due for release in October. But ... which? Send us a list of what you think they should be, and the person with the list closest to the actual selections made for the disc will win a signed copy.

"Vote on what you want to see on that CD," says Uwe. "We have an idea what we want to put on there, but it's the weird stuff that we want to find out about, what people really like of the other stuff" beyond "Carolina in the Fall," "Forever and a Day," and the other (brilliant though they are) obvious choices.

Oh, they need a **title** too, so, let us know your ideas. Send entries to glenherbert@sympatico.ca The deadline is August 20.

Rare Kruger CDs Discovered in Swiss Basement!



You'll think I'm kidding, but it's true: Seventy-five copies of the **Appalachian Barn Orchestra CD** have been languishing since

the early 90s, lost and forgotten in the basement of the band's one-time label in Switzerland. Recently discovered, they are the last copies of the disc, ever, and will be made available through the Kruger's online store to newsletter subscribers. Nice!

"It's a real antiquity" says Uwe. Recorded in 1989, and featuring Christa on bass, the album was the first recording to feature Jens and Uwe together in what would become the Kruger Brothers format. Uwe credits it for some of their early success, including some of their first live shows as well as the inspiration for a radio show called, of all things, the Kruger Brothers Radio Show that was (*con't.*)

broadcast on DRS 3 radio in Basel, Switzerland.

"We always had a guest, somebody who was touring," says Uwe of the show. "We'd practice with them in the afternoon and then play a live program with them in the evening on national radio. We did that for four years."

The CDs are available to newsletter subscribers now on the online store. ►

A North Carolina Christmas ... in July

The weather outside really was frightful. Hot. Muggy. You know, with a few impressive thunderstorms. But despite days when it was over 100° in the shade (I'm not kidding) the boys were inside singing songs about Santa Claus, snow, and warming up by the fire. I mean, what else would you do in Carolina in July when it's too hot to go outside?

The result is a holiday CD, *Christmas with the Kruger Brothers*. "It will have a good dozen songs on there that span from swing to classical," says Uwe. "I've really wanted to do this for some time now. I'm really excited about it. I'm singing most of it, but Jens is doing a Bach piece,

which is really nice."

The CD will be released at the end of October, and will be made available at concerts, through CD Baby, Elderly Instruments, and the Kruger Brothers' online store.



Joel's Upright Bass

It's a bit elusive, Joel's stand-up bass. You don't see it often, but when you do, you don't forget it. It looks one-of-a-kind because, well, it is ... in more ways than one.



The bass was a birthday gift from Jens and Uwe, in part to replace a stand-up bass that was left back in Switzerland at the time of the move. An

Englehardt bass built in the US, it sounded good, but ... the finish had seen better days. Joel mentioned this to David Taylor who said that the finish was something he could help out with.

"So I turned the bass over to David and,

lo and behold, not only did it get refinished, but it also got a custom paint job by Tut Taylor," David's father.

"Tut has painted a few other things as well," says Joel. "He painted a banjo case for Jens. He painted one of my cases for my electric bass. He made his living as a sign painter, back in the day, in addition to playing the dobro, and doing musical things, that's how he fed his family."

Those musical things included playing on the Grammy-winning "The Great Dobro Sessions," and John Hartford's "Aereo-Plain."

"He actually painted Flatt and Scruggs' bus way back in the 30s. And then Bill Monroe's mandolin case," which you now can visit along with the mandolin it was built to hold at the Country Music Hall of Fame.

"It's just a fabulous piece of work," Joel says about the bass (though Monroe's mandolin is pretty good, too). "He turned this ugly duckling into a real swan of a bass."

"It's also a wonderful sounding bass." You can hear it on *Choices*, where it also appears in the CD art.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.

First Person Singular

Q: *What's the significance of the title "Jack of the Wood"?*

Jens: "The name came from the bar in Asheville because they were the first ones to give us a job after Merlefest. They saw us at Merlefest and said would you come down and play at our place. We said of course. So we went down and it was, 1997, it was the first show we played [in North America] outside Merlefest. And people came and we really liked it, and we said, well, if you want to have us back, we'll come back. So, today it's the only bar in America that we play. And when we play there it's usually full and its very celebratory. It's very exciting, and sometimes the whole bar is very quiet, but they sing "Carolina in the Fall" very loudly along with us. It's very intense. People being together and celebrating. It's like a celebration of something, though maybe you don't know what it is that you're celebrating."



There were a few other modifications—a new tailpiece, a new bridge—but it's the detailing that gets noticed: floral scrollwork on the front, and, on the back, a cherub playing a lyre.



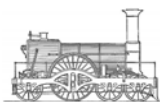
The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things they have seen"

On the Road

Early in the month is a stop at the **Happy Valley Old-Time Fiddlers Convention in Lenoir, NC**. The festival is held on a farm that is the final resting place of Laura Foster, infamously killed by Tom Dooley and immortalized in the song of the same name, "North Carolina's best-known murder ballad." The festival pays tribute to that story as well as the lore and music of the Yadkin Valley. The KBs will be joined by Bobby Hicks on the Sunday. **The Mountain Song Festival in Brevard, NC**, is an annual benefit for the Boys & Girls Club of Transylvania County, NC. The festival takes place the weekend of September 10. At the end of the month they begin a short western tour with the first stop in **Wichita, Texas**, for a concert at **Midwestern State University**. Then, it's on to the **Okalahoma International Bluegrass Festival**. The band is headed off to Switzerland for a few dates in December including an "Appalachian Christmas Gala" in **Sarnen, Switzerland**, on the 5th of December. ►



In the News

"**Song of the Mountains**" show #514 featuring the KBs aired on PBS on August 11. • **Two new CDs**, *Christmas Magic with the Kruger Brothers* as well as a Best Of compilation will be out later this fall. Stay tuned for details. • **Josh Goforth** will be heading out with the KBs for their December dates in Switzerland, and will be adding fiddle and mandolin to the Kruger sound. • Jens' solo album, *The Bridge*, is available on iTunes. • Three songs from Merlefest 2010 are slated for inclusion on an upcoming **FestivaLink compilation** of music from this year's festival. • The **new studio** is nearing completion, and will be launched in October. • An extensive **European tour** is in the works for May, 2011. ►

www.krugerbros.com


Uwe is a great musician, and he's a great photographer too. This is a shot he snapped this summer near his home in Wilkesboro. (And if you have any idea what kind of butterfly this is, he'd love to know.)

Two New CDs!

Christmas Magic with the Kruger Brothers will be released later this month. Old favorites and some new songs, too, make up the collection. Though, as with any KBs recording, it promises not to be like anything you've heard before—swing, country, bluegrass, jazz, it will showcase the full Americana spectrum, Kruger-style.

Thanks also to all the people who sent in song suggestions, top 20 lists, and title suggestions for the upcoming **Best Of collection**. As anyone who tried putting a list together quickly found out, limiting the collection to 20 tracks isn't easy. There are the usual suspects, but as many of you noted, there are some great outliers as well. There were even lots of votes for the instrumental piece "Behind the Barn" which is a favorite despite not yet having been released on CD.

The contest winner, as well as a list of the songs to be included in the collection will appear in the November newsletter.

Studio Grand Opening Scheduled for October



The new studio is nearly complete and if you squint at the photo here you can see the sheetrock for the

interior walls. Informally dubbed the "Binary Barn," the studio has been in the works since ground was broken almost one year ago. The main floor will house the Double Time offices, a recording space, a small warehouse, and a meeting area where people can meet and have a gab. Upstairs will be the editing room as well as Philip's office.

Philip, in many respects, has been the driving force behind the construction. "The idea is to have a facility where the Kruger Brothers can record without the pressure of a clock, you aren't running up a bill with each hour you are working ... [a place where] we don't have the stress of the time pressure getting in the way of the creative process."

Despite the absence of a formal studio

setting—there have been other sites, including a desanctified church, where all the recording has taken place—that philosophy has guided all the KBs projects.

“We’ve been doing our productions ourselves from the beginning ... In 1995, when Jens and Uwe recorded *Behind the Barn* they recorded it at the end of his

house, basically. ...

On the last album, when we recorded Josh Day’s drums, we just miked up his drums in Jens’ living room and recorded him there.”

The studio will centralize operations and allow a place to record and produce other’s projects. The grand opening is scheduled for October 17. ►



This is where it will all happen—a shot of what will soon be the main recording area.



First Person Singular

Q: What’s it like being part of a trio as closely knit as the Kruger Brothers?

Joel: “It really does come down to that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. That’s a great example of what we are. Each person tries to be the best that he can on his instrument but when the three of us come together, that’s where the magic is created. We’ve been working together for so long that a lot of what we do is nonverbal, especially the way we communicate on stage. In doing so we also try to involve the audience. We don’t exclude them from the creative process that’s happening on stage, and I think that’s something that people appreciate in our performances. We’re not playing at them, we’re saying ‘listen to what we found, listen to this.’”

The Man Behind the Kruger Sound

Philip Zanon does everything, it seems, yet his goal is not to be noticed at all

“At the moment, I guess I’m a studio construction contractor” Philip quips when I ask what his title is. Admittedly, he does a lot. “This afternoon I’m going to finish editing the Christmas songs, book flights for the December tour, respond to a request from FestivalLink, write a contract for Josh Goforth, order the siding for the studio, and then there’s a bunch of smaller stuff.” Not bad for an afternoon, is it?

“For my profession, though, I’d say I’m an engineer.” And whenever we see him, that’s exactly what he is: he runs sound at shows and otherwise makes the KBs sound like, well, the KBs.

It’s a job that started informally with Jens in 1995 with some recording projects, developing into a full-time position with the KBs in 1997. He’s been with them ever since. “I’ve never looked at it as work. It’s just something I really enjoy doing, especially when I think of the mission we are on, to make a room full of people happy.”

“With any performance, I try not to be in the way of the musicians, [yet] to allow them to reach a greater number of people than they could if they were playing acoustically.” All going well “when they start playing, people don’t even know there is amplification. ... If I can be unnoticed, and not hindering the emotion of the presentation, but enhancing the impact in the room, then I feel like I’m succeeding.”

Whenever you go to a concert or listen to a KBs CD, you may not be noticing him, but you’re hearing him. And he sounds pretty good, doesn’t he? ►

On the Web

One of the things that may set Wayne Henderson apart from many other luthiers is that he is an excellent player. He plays in an unconventional style; he uses finger picks, but if you’re not watching his hands, you’d swear he was flat picking.

You can see Uwe playing his Henderson guitar with Jens and Wayne in Wayne’s studio at the following links:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsFd8jAipg8>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyygKnJO-8>

Uwe’s Henderson

To say it’s one of a kind is an understatement. To say it’s coveted? That’s an understatement, too.

There are lots of great guitars in the world, but only 500 or so Hendersons. And, as presented in Allen St. John’s book *Clapton’s Guitar Watching Wayne Henderson Build the Perfect Guitar*, they may represent the height of art of guitar making. All are built by one man, Wayne Henderson, in a shop in Rugby, Virginia (pop. 8).

“They are really handmade,” says Uwe of Henderson’s guitars. “There is nothing prefab on this thing except for maybe the tuning machines.” Henderson famously turns the bridge pins, strap buttons, cuts the pickguards. He also whittles the necks and heels by hand with a pen knife.

And, as with many things, perfection takes time, and the average for receipt of one of these is somewhere around the 10-year mark. Uwe waited nine years for his. In that time he drove to Henderson’s shop many times, some times twice a week, just to keep an eye on progress, and perhaps also to prod the builder along. “If you’re not on him, you’ll never get a guitar.”

It’s number 371, and Doc’s is 369.

“They were both in the same spray booth, and the necks are made from the same piece of wood.”



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things they have seen"

On the Road

On the 1st and 2nd the KBs will be at the **Okalahoma International Bluegrass Festival** in **Guthrie, Oklahoma**. Then it's back home for a benefit concert with Sara Bareilles conducted as part of the **Wilkes Heart and Stroke Walk**. The concert is on the MerleFest grounds at Wilkes Community College, **Wilkesboro, NC**, on Saturday, Oct. 9. The Heart and Stroke Walk was organized in 2006 by Lynn Day of in memory of her husband, Sam Day. The Days' son, Josh, is the percussionist who tours with the KBs and who was featured on the CD *Forever and a Day*. Later in the month there is a stop in **Chapel Hill, NC**, and then on the 30th they will be playing a **Halloween concert** at the Statesville Civic Center in **Statesville, NC**. ►



In the News

The Kruger Brothers were signed by Jim Fleming of the Fleming Artists agency. • **Christmas Magic with the Kruger Brothers** will be released later this month.

• Rehearsals have begun for "**An Appalachian Concerto**" which will premiere in November featuring the Kruger Brothers and the Blue Ridge Chamber Players. • Live recordings of "Jack of the Wood," "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right," and "Frosty Morn/The Coo Coo Bird/Twin Sisters" are featured on Volume 1 of the **FestivaLink Merlefest 2010** collection of live recordings from the festival. The collection is available through FestivaLink at:

<http://flink.livedownloads.com/show.asp?show=5496>

• The **new studio** will receive a grand opening on October 17. • Uwe is now on Facebook, so look for him there. • **Josh Goforth** will be heading off with the KBs for the coming dates in Europe. Among them is "A Christmas Gala" on December 5th in Sarnen, Switzerland. ►



Yves Savariaud singing "Envers et contre temps," a French-language adaptation of the Krugers' "Appalachian Mist." This photo was taken at the Cook Shack in Union Grove, NC.

The Kruger Brothers sign with Fleming Artists

The Kruger Brothers are proud to announce their signing by Jim Fleming at **Fleming Artists**. For more than 30 years Fleming has represented some of the world's finest and most respected touring artists, and today their artist roster includes artists ranging from Ani DiFranco, to Judy Collins, to Tom Paxton. The mission of Fleming Artists is to represent artists who have something to say through their art; artists who aspire to achieve the highest level of artistry.



FLEMING ARTISTS

Christmas comes early this year!



The holiday collection, *Christmas Magic with the Kruger Brothers*, features new recordings of some holiday favorites and some surprises too. Not the least of those is a track featuring Jens on lead vocals on a version of "Mele Kalikimaka." It's a delight, as is everything on the disc. Copies will be available through the web store later this month.

Appalachian Concerto to Premiere Nov. 20

"It's my romantic idea of the Appalachians," says Jens of a new chamber piece now in rehearsal. The project titled "An Appalachian Concerto" was initiated by Nick Lampo, a cello player with the Blue Ridge Chamber Players (BRCP).

"He had seen us play, and he always wanted to play music with us." That desire led him to a partnership with the Ashe Civic Center to commission Jens for a new piece to feature the Kruger Brothers and the BRCP.

"The theme [of the piece] is sort of the discovery of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Appalachians," by the early European settlers to the region. "You know, you come from Europe and everything's crowded, you come here and you're alone."

"This is just very personal," says Jens. "It may not be based in universal truth ... [but] that's the romantic part about it. You know, when I listen to something like, let's say, 'Frosty Morn' or something, there is a loneliness and something mystic about it. There's a [sense of] longing that draws me to the music. ... I want to reflect some of those ideas that I have about this place."

The piece will premiere on November 20 at the Ashe Civic Center in West Jefferson, NC. ►



Jens and Joel rehearsing with Nick Lampo, cellist with the Blue Ridge Chamber Players.



Steve Martin caught up with the Kruger Brothers back stage at the Mountain Song Festival in Brevard, NC. Martin joined the Steep Canyon Rangers onstage then stayed for the Krugers' set. Needless to say, he was blown away. The banjo Jens is holding is Martin's prewar Gibson.



It's a ... swallowtail!



What a bunch of lepidopterists you people are! Given the number of responses, it seems that Uwe might be one of the few people in Appalachia that is unable to identify the **Eastern Tiger Swallowtail** on sight. The butterflies were pictured in a photo by Uwe in the last newsletter.

The Eastern Tiger Swallowtail is not only common, but is also the state butterfly of Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, and South Carolina, and is the state insect of Virginia. (North Carolina doesn't have a state butterfly. The state insect is the honeybee.)

The first known drawing of a North American butterfly was of an Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, and it was drawn by John White in 1587. The ones in Uwe's photo are mostly females, though the one shown in flight is a male, as indicated by the blue on the wings.

Thanks for all your thoughts, interesting facts, and positive IDs. ►

First Person Singular

Yves Savariaud is the man seen singing and playing guitar in the photo on pg. 1. From France, Yves is a KB fan and adapts their songs into French. When he arrived at the Cook Shack he had no idea he was about to meet the KBs, let alone play with them, let alone sing an adaptation of "Appalachian Mist" with Maynard Holbrook—the inspiration for the song—singing harmony. Yves describes the event as a fairy tale come true.

How did you first learn about the Kruger Brothers?

Yves: A friend that I met in France sent me some CDs he liked to listen to, and one of them was Up 18 North. It was a revelation for me, especially the tune "Carolina in the Fall."

Q: How do you approach adapting a song into French?

Yves: "First of all I listen to the whole and need to have an immediate emotion and a need to transmit what I feel. I feel that my work when adapting is to try to understand what the writer thinks and feels, and then to try to transcribe that into French. I do not translate the songs literally."

The next challenge is to write the lyric in rhyme, trying to use as well the meaning of words as well as the sounds of the words.

Q: What in particular draws you to the music of the KBs?

Yves: "I'm not expert enough in English to be touched, at first, by the lyrics. It's rather a question of vibrations and emotion. Of course it's also a question of admiration of the virtuosity and finesse, and sensibility in their playing. There is never a note just to fill the space. Each note has its importance and is an important part of the whole."



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



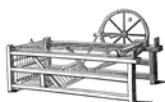
The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things they have seen"

On the Road

The KBs are just back from a few short hops around NC, including a night at the **Jack of the Wood** pub in **Asheville** on Oct. 21st. This month they are sticking close to home in order to rehearse in preparation for the premiere of **"An Appalachian Concerto"** at the Ashe Civic Center in **West Jefferson, NC**. Early in December they are off to **Switzerland** for some dates there including the Christmas Gala in Sarnen on Dec. 5. ►



In the News

The **new studio** has opened! The grand opening open house featured the Krugers and some musical friends, including Nicky Sanders of the Steep Canyon Rangers. For video of the event see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqVTvquql0Y>

• Jens was in Nashville recently to instruct alongside Tony Trischka, Bill Emerson, and others at **Sonny Osborne's Banjo Camp, Nashcamp**. • The **5th Annual Wilkesboro Heart and Stroke** walk netted \$38 000 for medical research. The KBs performed at the Creekside Stage at Wilkes Community College with Sara Bareilles in support of the cause. ►



Jens and banjo legend **Bill Emerson** after a banjo workshop at the Okalahoma International Bluegrass Festival in Guthrie, Oklahoma.



The **new studio** was officially opened on October 17. There to cut the ribbon were (l to r) Joel, Uwe, Dave Anderson, Philip, Bill Hughes, and Jens. Photo courtesy Skip Vetter.

Christmas Magic at the online store



Christmas Magic with the Kruger Brothers covers the gamut of Christmas music, from the centuries old "O Come All Ye

Faithful," to show tunes from the 20s and 30s, to a song that was written just this year ("The Lights in Our Village"). There's some music trivia in here, too: the collection includes a novelty song written by a fighter ace who flew combat missions above France in WWI ("Mele Kalikimaka"), a song about cowboys written by a Virginian (Steve Weisberg, "Christmas for Cowboys"), and a song about snowy weather written during a heat wave in Hollywood, California ("Let it Snow").

But, of course, it's a Kruger Brothers album and could easily serve as an education for anyone interested in the vast range of musical traditions alive in American music today, from Broadway to bluegrass.

Christmas Magic with the Kruger Brothers is now available through the online store, via CDBaby, Amazon, and at live performances. ►

The new studio hits all the right notes



Natural light streams in through tall windows framing views of the trees and the mountains. It

feels light, bright, and entirely in tune with the surrounding environment. The studio may not be a new beginning, but it marks a new phase in the life of the Kruger Brothers. It will be the home of the Kruger organization, housing the offices as well as the recording facility. In a way, it's also a statement of their plan for the future—the studio, located on a large piece of property and surrounded by stunning views of the Brushy Mountains, is a place to stop, to stay, and to work. ►

A fitting tribute to the Kruger Brothers' #1 Fan



Tut Taylor is a Grammy winner, the innovator of a unique style of playing dobro that served as a model to many, and is truly a

living legend in bluegrass music. He's played with Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe,

Norman Blake, Clarence White, Porter Wagoner, Vassar Clements, and with John Hartford as a member of the groundbreaking Aereo-Plain band.

Of course, Tut is also the Kruger Brothers #1 fan—the title is self-proclaimed but is also well-earned. He can be heard on *Carolina Scrapbook, Vol. 1* playing his “Chain Hoist,” “Steven’s Steel,” and telling stories about Tootie and the Crawfish, life in a small town, and what it’s like to ruin a pair Bill Monroe’s prize alligator shoes.

Taylor is now the subject of *Southern Filibuster: A Tribute to Tut Taylor*, a recent project produced by Jerry Douglas. The recording features Rob Ickes, Randy Kohrs, Cindy Cashdollar, Mike Auldridge, Phil Leadbetter, and Jerry Douglas, among others, all playing Taylor’s compositions.

“Everybody loves Tut,” says Douglas. “And not just his personality, him being such a nice guy, but it’s also the contribution he’s made to the industry.”

“It seems we live in a time when many pioneers’ works go unnoticed or [are] forgotten. We decided it was time to honor someone who has left a definite mark on the advancement of the instrument we love and treasure.”

All proceeds from the sale of the disc go directly to Tut Taylor. ►



Are you ready for the Appalachian Concerto?

All I can say is: brace yourself. It truly is like nothing you’ve ever heard before.

Jens composed the *Appalachian Concerto* this fall, finishing up just a few weeks ago, and I was lucky enough to hear a sample of it when I was down for the studio opening. It sounds just as you would expect a concerto to and takes the concerti of Bach, Vivaldi, and Mozart as models. Themes are raised, dropped and interwoven, and move from voice to voice among the instruments and across the registers. There are puckish surprises along the way, too, especially in Jens’ use of counterpoint and harmony which continually refocus attention and move the narrative of the piece forward.

It’s easy to see that when the concerto premieres on the 20th of this month there www.krugerbros.com

will be some obvious comparisons to Aaron Copland, in part because so few composers have done as successfully what he did with American vernacular musical forms. Like Copland, Jens uses the themes and instrumentation of traditional music to convey new ideas; also like Copland, there are lots of familiar sounds and musical passages that point to various musical traditions, though none of them stands entirely on its own or for its own sake.

Where it differs is in the explicit comparisons Jens draws between North American musical traditions and

First Person Singular

*Kermit sang, “It Ain’t Easy Being Green.”
Ok, how about being a Swiss bluegrass band?*



Joel: “The question that pops up most often [in interviews] is, How do two guys from Switzerland end up playing bluegrass music?”

... [to me] it seems like a silly question. There’s nothing new about being from somewhere else. Everyone in this country was at one time or another from somewhere else. And the thing is we’re not really a bluegrass band, and music itself is such a universal thing.

The music that we make is the culmination of all the influences that we’ve amassed over the years. Our influences range from everything from the music that our parents listened to the stuff that we grew up listening to. You know, we were all children of the 70s basically and were all influenced by all the different musical styles at the time.

... That is truly what American folk music is about—it’s about creativity, about finding your own voice. Jens often tells the story about when he was with Bill Monroe in his kitchen that summer sitting and playing banjo and mandolin all night long ... and Bill would say to him, ‘play me something’ and Jens would play him a lick and he’d say, ‘no, no, that’s Earl Scruggs. You play me something.’ And he’d play something and he’d say ‘no, no that’s Don Reno, I want to hear Jens Kruger.’ That left a very deep imprint on him to go and find his own musical voice.”

European forms. The structure is strictly that of classical concerti, with three movements and a standard instrumentation. That Jens uses this form as a setting for traditional Appalachian themes, and does so with such ease, suggests not only his remarkable facility for composition, but affirms the idea that these things aren’t really that far apart after all.

And that banjo! The instrument simply has never sounded this sophisticated, clear, and jaw-droppingly beautiful before. If you’ve ever had doubts about the effectiveness of banjo in an entirely classical setting, this piece will dismiss them.

Perhaps I’m biased (of course I am) but when I heard selections from the piece, I couldn’t help but think what an important work this is. Sadly, there are only 300 tickets available for the premiere, and if you don’t have them in hand now, you won’t be going—they sold out in days. For those of us who won’t be there, we can look forward to other productions of the piece as well as a recording on disc, which could be available as early as this coming spring. ►

We Get Mail!

Thanks to everyone for writing in with questions, ideas, and hellos. There has been email from literally around the world.

Kichisaburo Takeda writes from Osaka, Japan, that he first saw the Kruger Brothers live in Frankfurt a few years ago and has been a fan ever since. He forwarded this photo of his band—he is the guitar player in the red tie, second from the left.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things they have seen"

On the Road

The KBs are off to **Switzerland** early this month. The main show there is a doozy, a Christmas Gala in **Sarnen** on the 5th featuring **Josh Goforth**, master fiddler and scholar (literally) of Appalachian music. Then, it's back to this side of the pond for a benefit for the **Junior Appalachian Musicians** in **West Jefferson, NC**, on the 11th and a concert in **Statesville, NC**, on the 19th. Into the new year, watch this space (or the website) for dates in Canada, including Toronto and Ottawa. ►



In the News

The **Appalachian Concerto** premiered to a very receptive audience (that's an understatement) on November 20 in West Jefferson NC. • Jens inducted into the **Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame**. • In October the KBs topped the **Folk DJ charts**. The charts are based on radio play. • We were saddened to hear of the passing of **Drake Walsh**, a wonderful musician and inspiration to many in the Wilkesboro area and beyond. • Jens and Uwe will be heading into the studio to lend a hand with **Steve Spurgin's** upcoming album. ►

Jens inducted to the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame



It's home to Doc Watson, Earl Scruggs, the Carter Family, the Stanley Brothers, and now the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame will be home to Jens Kruger as well. A

notice of the induction has been made, though it will be celebrated with a formal induction ceremony on July 11, 2011. The hall of fame celebrates the musicians and music professionals of the Blue Ridge region. ►



Philip setting a mic in preparation for the premiere of the Appalachian Concerto last month in West Jefferson, NC.

Forever and a Day reaches #4 on the folk charts

The Krugers have entered the folk DJ charts for October following some extremely well-received performances at this year's IBMA. Here's the tale of the tape:

Top Albums for October 2010:

- #4 Forever and a Day
- #11 Between the Notes

Top Songs for October 2010

- #9 "Forever and a Day"
- #21 "Down in the Coalmine" (tie)
- #21 "Don't Think Twice" (tie)

Art is not a competition of course, but just for reference, for the month of October this sets them ahead of people like, well, there's Tim O'Brien, Pete Rowan, The Steeldrivers, and, at #21 on the album chart, Bob Dylan. Not bad company, really. The charts are compiled based on the number of plays by 150 folk radio DJs polled in the US and around the world. For the full lists, see:

<http://www.folkalliance.org/FolkDJChart/tabid/85/Default.aspx>

Appalachian Concerto premieres to ovations, encores, and rave reviews

On the night of November 20 the KBs shared the bill with the Green Mountain Chamber Players for a program that included the premiere the *Appalachian Concerto*.

"It was really intense," says Uwe. "It was really one of evenings where everything just came together."

"Usually you get on stage and present what you practiced, though here it all came together that evening. So we had 350 actually watching music being made."

Dan Shearer was one of the lucky ones there that night. "At the end of the first movement, the audience jumped—I mean literally 'jumped'—up from their seats and gave a loud, cheering, standing ovation." At the completion of the third movement the reception was equally raucous with another prolonged standing ovation followed by an encore performance of the third movement.

"I am very proud to have been in the audience to hear a preview of what is to come," said Larry Combs in an email. Of

the rich texture of the composition, as well as the evening as a whole, he says that “words can’t describe the emotions.”

So, by all counts, those of us who weren’t there really missed something special. A recording of the concerto, all going well, will be available in the spring. ►



The Green Mountain Chamber Players joined the KBs in West Jefferson and will also be featured in the upcoming recording of the concerto.

Remembering Drake Walsh



The Wilkesboro community, and the music community in particular, was shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden passing of

Drake Walsh on November 24.

Primarily a mandolin and fiddle player, Walsh began playing banjo when he was six years old. The son of Dock Walsh, a professional musician and writer of “In the Pines,” he was immersed in the music of the region from a very young age.

In later years Walsh was a member of the Elkville String Band, the house band for the Tom Dooley Legend performances in Wilkes County. “They were *the* local band,” says Uwe of the group that included Herb Key, Bill Williams, Jeff Michael, and which often featured Wayne Henderson in performances and on their recent CD, *Over the Mountain*.

“[Walsh] was one of these guys who kept the music alive through those times when nobody cared about it.

“Whenever he saw my car down at the pawn shop he would always stop, come in, grab any old mandolin and just sit there and play. We always had such a good time together.”

Walsh will be terribly missed by all who knew him and those who were inspired by his music. ►

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

The holiday season is always a time for reflection on the year passed, and what a year this has been. I’ve been delighted to begin this adventure with the newsletter, and have been floored by all the wonderful responses from literally the world over. So, a hearty thank you to everyone who has been reading the newsletters and to those who have written in with comments and ideas.

This year has seen two new Kruger CDs and lots of spectacular performances. (I’ll never forget hearing “Beautiful Nothing” from the main stage at Merlefest, with literally thousands of people in silence during the break in that song, the only sounds being the birds and

First Person Singular

What is the collaboration process when songwriting?



Uwe: “Sometimes I just write a simple song. Like, I just wrote a country song and Jens says ‘yes, that’s it.’ But I never have that preconception [that what I write is complete]. When

I write the songs, I’m completely open to what Jens has to say, what he likes and what he doesn’t like, because we all have to agree on the things that we want to put out there ...

But Jens also takes criticism from me when he writes his pieces and I say ‘well, repeat this line here,’ or ‘can you slow it down here a little bit’ or the whole thing is too fast or too slow ... we are very open to each other, to each other’s criticism, which is always a constructive thing. Criticism is always for the greater good, so the thing comes out as nicely as possible.

But I also know that a song is like a rock in a river; we have to play it over and over again and, like the rock in the river, it becomes smooth. When I write [songs] I try not to stick too much to the words, to learn them right away, so I can change things and not have to sacrifice anything. I can just cross them out and replace them. And then once I’ve done that, and maybe Jens puts a new melody over it, it can become like a completely new song.” ►

the breeze in the leaves of the trees that provide a backdrop for the Watson Theater. It was breathtaking.)

The *Appalachian Concerto* is an important mark in the KBs career, the advent of a truly unique piece of music. On the business side, the year brought a new agent and a new recording studio.

But as always, it’s about the music and the people. Thank you for being there, for sharing in all the moments, the memories, and the music. All the very best to you and yours throughout this holiday season. May you have a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of New Years. ►

*Merry Christmas
from the
Kruger Brothers*



We Get Mail!

Jim Hadden from Anglemont, BC, Canada, wrote to ask:

Q: “On YouTube, there is a video called ‘Kruger-Watch the Clouds Roll By.’ When the song ends, Jens rolls into an absolutely beautiful piece to end the video. What is the name of the song and could it be added to a future album?”

A: The piece is titled “Luminous Waters” from *Music From the Spring*. There are many pieces within that larger work that have been released in other versions on their own, but this one isn’t one of them (yet). The video was taken in May of 2009 during a performance with the Thayer Symphony Orchestra in Leominster, Massachusetts.

To see the video, click on this link:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/CharlieHend#p/u/13/O8qgrnvYU0c>



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things they have seen"

On the Road

After a lengthy flight delay in Atlanta due to severe weather, the KBs finally made it to Switzerland in time for their December dates there, including an evening in **Zurich** providing entertainment for the Siemens' year end party (yes, that Siemens, the megalithic technology company). Then it was on to **Sarnen** for a public Christmas gala. They were joined by Josh Goforth throughout, from the big gigs to a small party in a typically Swiss alpine hotel. In January they're cooling their jets momentarily and spending a bit of time in the studio to record the **Appalachian Concerto**. After a few local dates in **NC** they're off to Canada in early February. On the 9th they're at the Arts Court Theatre in **Ottawa**, Ontario. On the 10th they're at the venerated Hugh's Room in **Toronto**, one of the most important and long-standing folk music clubs in Canada. ►



In the News

Jens and Philip will be at the **NAMM show**, in Anaheim, CA, January 13-19 • Pretty much as you read this, recording is beginning on the **Appalachian Concerto**, to be available in the spring. • **Barb Heller**, a DJ on NCPR and Folk Alley, named *Forever and a Day* as her top pick for the **Best of 2010**. ►

In Switzerland with the Kruger Brothers

Ever wonder what it's like to travel with the Kruger Brothers? Don and Kathryn Shearer found out in December when they headed off to Switzerland with the band. Apparently it's much as you'd expect—great times, great friends, and great music ...

by Dan Shearer

Traveling with the Krüger Brothers and Josh Goforth on a musical adventure in Switzerland was exciting and busy—three performances back-to-back. The first one was in Zurich for the annual Siemens' employee Christmas event. The band was spread out on a large stage, Uwe on guitar, Joel on bass, Jens alternating between banjo and electric guitar, Josh between mandolin and fiddle, and a Swiss

friend and drummer set up on a platform in the back. Reminiscent of an earlier chapter in their career, the Krügers mixture of American pop, dance, and folk music was a perfect fit for this dinner audience of over fifteen hundred.

The next day we drove to a charming alpine hotel in Seelisberg overlooking Lake Lucerne where the Krügers and Josh played for a close friend's sixty-fifth dinner/birthday party. (Do you know about the Swiss fascination with American Country, Western, and Bluegrass music? How surprised we were to witness a lovely young Swiss gal with her guitar stepping on stage with the Krügers to lead the entire Swiss dinner crowd in a rendition of "Country Roads" ... in English!)

After spending the night in the hotel, we left for Sarnen for the special Appalachian Christmas Gala featured on the band's web site. What fun! "Krüger



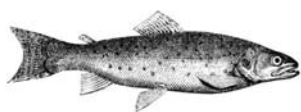
Happy New Year !

Wishing that the holiday season brought all that you hoped for and then some. All the best for 2011.

—The Kruger Brothers

Brothers music" followed by several standing ovations, impromptu Christmas songs woven into the band's well-known, and a playful version of "Dueling Banjos." We two "Americans in Sarnen" got such a kick out of having no earthly idea what the Krügers were saying in-between songs, but we enthusiastically joined the crowd in laughter after each witticism coming from the stage.

And what a special treat to watch and listen to Josh and appreciate his contribution to the music at each venue with his fiddle, mandolin, and beautiful voice. I expect we'll see more of this young man on stage with the Krüger Brothers. ►



New life for the Stoughton Opera House



House in Stoughton, WI. By any measure, it is a stunning venue.

Opened in 1901, in the early years the theatre was a crown jewel of Stoughton architecture and served as a setting for everything from high opera to temperance meetings. The Governor spoke here, minstrels played, and vaudeville touring shows brought entertainment until tastes changed and movies displaced live performance as the entertainment of choice.

If it was an end of an era, few noticed at the time. The Opera House became the physical embodiment of a changing world; painted a dull grey, a roof left untended, the removal of an iconic clock tower, and soon the hall was unrecognizable for what it had been. Inevitably, by the late 70s it was abandoned entirely.

Then the theatre's fortunes changed. In the early 1980s some citizens of Stoughton came together to find a way to restore the venue to its former glory, and boy did they. It was decades of fundraising, consciousness raising, and just plain hard work, but the result is something for which the city is rightly very proud. Today, the theater is a marvel, once again a crown jewel of the city's architecture. ►



The Krüger Brothers appear at the Stoughton Opera House in Stoughton, Wisconsin, on February 13.

Jens and Philip to attend NAMM trade show

Jens and Philip will be on hand at the NAMM show in Anaheim, CA, January 13-16.

NAMM, the National Association of Music Merchants, hosts the yearly trade show which serves as a hub for people wanting to seek out the newest innovations in musical products, recording technology, sound and lighting. For people in the music industry, or interested in the music industry, it's the largest candy store on earth and is anticipated with the same level of antsy excitement that ten year olds anticipate Christmas.

Jens and Philip will be with Greg and Janet Deering at the Deering Banjos booth. They'll be shaking howdy, answering questions, and demonstrating instruments. If you are anywhere near Anaheim in mid January, be sure to stop by and say hi. ►



First Person Singular

Why do you do it?



Uwe: "It's just a way of life for me. I like the feel of my fingers on the instrument, and I like the feeling that singing gives me. Those may sound like very selfish things, but there is a magic to playing music [such as] the melding of minds when we're on stage. There is something more, my ego disappears and I become part of something bigger. That's a feeling that is addictive. It's something I can't be without. If I have it every day for a week, then maybe I need a break for a day or so, but then I get up in the morning, and I get my guitar, and I'm going to go over to Jens' and we're going to play all afternoon. ... I just do it. It makes me feel good—it's my job, it's my passion, it's my ... *calling*? [laughs] I don't know. Sometimes it feels like a curse when I've been in the car for 16 hours. But, seriously, it's an immensely satisfying experience when we have a nice show and we see those smiling faces and we go out and greet people ... It's such a satisfying experience to have something like this and to see that people get something from what we do." ►

On the Web

This will make you wish you'd been at Silver Dollar City last summer—Wildwood Flower:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpY0ekvH2Rc>

There are some nice clips posted as well from a holiday show in December. Here they perform Christmas Island with Laura Boosing on vocals:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ho6saiNa2A&NR=1>

To access these videos, click the link or copy/paste it into your browser.



The Krüger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbrothers.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things they have seen"

In the News

The KBs are just coming off four sold out shows at the **Cook Shack** in Union Grove, NC, that included some very nice guest appearances including Si Kahn, Zeb Snyder, and Nicky Sanders. • The band will be attending the **23rd Annual Folk Alliance Conference** this month in Memphis, TN, where they'll be performing at numerous workshops, showcases, and backing up **Si Kahn**, who won CD of the year for *Courage*, as well as song of the year for "Peace Will Rise." Jens produced the album and plays all the instruments featured on it, of course including the very distinctive banjo accompaniment on "Peace Will Rise." ►

On the Road

The KBs begin this month with a show in **Chapel Hill, NC**, presented by Community Church Concerts on the 5th of Feb. Then they're off for a two dates in **Canada**: On they 9th they're in **Ottawa** at the Arts Court Theatre; on the 10th they're at **Toronto's** famed Hugh's Room. They're back in the states on the 11th for a concert at the The Ark in **Ann Arbor, MI**. On the 13th they play the venerable Stoughton Opera House in **Stoughton, WI**. Thoughts turning to spring these days? Some early festival dates to brighten the winter blahs: the KBs will be at **Merlefest** in **Wilksboro, NC**, from April 28 through May 1. They're also booked for the **Ossipee Valley Music Festival** in **South Hiram, ME**, July 22-25.



Hey, that's Philip! Anyone watching the daily podcasts from the NAMM conference in January would have caught a glimpse of Philip Zannon, Kruger sound engineer extraordinaire. He was sitting in on a session on new technology in the "Hot Zone."



Editorial

Remember the first time?

Like national disasters and great deeds, some things you just never forget ...

by Glen Herbert

The first KBs recording I ever heard was "My Cabin in Caroline" which a friend included on a disc of material that he thought I should know something about. I can remember vividly the first time that song really made an impression: I was in Toronto, driving in my Jetta (sigh ... I loved that car) and was stopped at a set of train tracks. And I remember thinking, good grief, whoever they are, they're awesome.

That song is still one of my favourite recordings from the Kruger Brothers, with that deliciously quiet guitar solo, the sound of a hand slapping a knee. That song makes greater use of dynamics than many musicians display in a lifetime.

So, yes, I wanted more, and I got it that spring on my way to Merlefest. On the drive we wore out *Travel the Gravel* and *Up 18 North*, and we actually—I know, it's hard to

believe—drove on Hwy 18 North! Amazing isn't it. (Ok, humor me.)

But then, this. We were camping on site that year, and I went down the night before the festival began to wander around and just get a feel for what was going on. Under a small marquee, in the dark, with only a few people watching, were Uwe and Tut just talking and playing. I'd seen pictures, so I knew who they were, but of course you could tell from listening as well. There I was, in thrall, with no one to turn to and say "THAT'S UWE KRUGER AND TUT TAYLOR! UWE KRUGER AND TUT TAYLOR ARE PLAYING HERE!" So, I just stood and listened and what I heard was two friends picking a bit before heading home—quiet, relaxed, and having lots of fun together. Uwe played "Don't Monkey 'Round My Widder," growling out the chorus and laughing that great laugh of his. I bug him to this day to play that song whenever I get the chance.

At one point Uwe said of the evening, "It's like the night before Christmas." It really was. The next day I saw the KBs on stage for the first time, and though there have been lots of times since then, there's just something about the first, isn't there? ►

Profile

Laura Boosinger

To begin a series of profiles of musicians who have played and recorded with the Kruger Brothers, Dan Shearer sat down with Laura Boosinger to talk about life, music, what it's like to collaborate with the Krugers.

by Dan Shearer



Laura Boosinger, "The Songbird of the Smokies"—or as Uwe likes to call her, "The Carolina Songbird"—learned to sing in church and school, harmonizing

with the Beach Boys and Beatles. In 1975 she learned claw hammer banjo from none other than David Holt (David Holt and the Lightning Bolts) while a student at Warren Wilson College. Since then, she has combined the two talents in what has become a twenty-five year musical career that includes solo releases as well as a thirteen-year stint with a swing band.

While Laura and Josh Goforth have been playing together for years as a duet, they became members of the Lightning Bolts in 2002 when

David Holt put the band together for the Country Night Gstaad music festival in a little town in Switzerland (not a bad place to start a band). Those of us in the greater Asheville area who appreciate folk, old-time, and bluegrass music know Laura and her music well. She is regular at Merlefest, not only as a performer but as one of the leaders in the banjo workshops and heads up the shape note singing workshop, for which she is justly famous.

Laura met the Kruger Brothers the first time the band played at Merlefest and later jammed with them at Fiddlers Grove, a local festival in Union Grove, NC, that has a long and rich history.

But it was the Kruger Brothers inviting her to be one of the featured artists on *Carolina Scrapbook Vol. 2* that brought their and Laura's professional and personal relationship to a new level. Today whenever the band performs within traveling distance of Asheville Laura joins them on stage to sing solos, harmony vocals, and to add her clawhammer banjo to the Kruger sound.

Ask Laura about her fondest memory of her association with Kruger Brothers over the years, and she will quickly say, "I absolutely love playing banjo duets with Jens."

She's also a great example of the interconnectedness the Kruger Brothers have with others, forming a musical family that goes far beyond what happens on stage. Of the hundreds of examples, here are two that involve Laura: Philip Zanon recorded Josh and Laura's CD, *Most of All*, in Laura's living room (Jens did the mixing); there's talk of Laura singing on Maynard Holbrook's new CD which Jens is producing.

Today Laura lives in Asheville, NC, area, though it took many moves before she finally settled there. Through it all she identifies closely with the line from "Carolina in the Fall," saying "folks have opened up the door; for the first time in my life I'm not a stranger anymore." It's a feeling she shares with so many of the fans and musicians that have become a part of the Kruger Brothers' family. ►



Laura Boosinger on stage with the Kruger Brothers at Carolina in the Fall, 2009.

www.krugerbros.com

The Ark: Ann Arbor's one-of-a-kind concert hall

We often think one concert hall is more or less the same as the next. Not this one.



The Ark is the kind of place that, if someone presented the initial idea to you, you would say, "Nice idea, but it will never work." Which is all the more amazing that it not only worked, but it's been working for upward of 40 years.

It began as a pretty simple idea: a number of churches in Ann Arbor came together in 1965 to create a place to, well, just get together. Being the '60s, there were a lot of new ideas floating around, and perhaps this was one of them. But soon it was a reality—a place for young people to gather, talk, sing, whatever.

Some students came to perform, lecture, tell jokes—the stage was pretty admitting of all kinds of things except preaching and proselytizing, which is quite something considering where the idea came from, to say nothing of the funding. Yes, you could talk theology, and many did, but on any given night you'd be just as likely to hear a philosopher, the sheriff, a lecture about the war in Viet Nam, a poet reading poems, shape note singing, or, well and truly, whatever.

Before long, there was lots music, too, from Iggy Pop (before he was Iggy Pop) to a hootenanny. Again, being the 60s, folk music had a lot of traction, and it was well represented.

Run entirely by volunteers, The Ark was a place where students could go to find a warm, inviting place to come together free from drugs, alcohol, and academic life. For the performers, it was a place to try out their material. Gilda Radner, for one, got her start here in the late 60s.

Times have changed, and at least superficially, The Ark has, too. In the late 70s The churches who were the source of the initial funding were no longer able to provide support. So, what to do?

Well, then came another idea that doesn't sound like a great one: they decided to raise funds through an annual folk festival. And that seemingly bad idea worked too, perhaps better than you can possibly imagine. The Ark is holding the 34th

annual festival this year, and it's all the funding drive The Ark needs to keep things going. They get the money they need, and the city now has a cherished and much lauded annual festival. How's that for win/win?

There have been moves, and the current location is the third, but the mission statement has the same basic intention it did 1965, with perhaps an emphasis on music: "*The Ark is a non-profit organization dedicated to the enrichment of the human spirit through the presentation, preservation and encouragement of folk, roots and ethnic music and related arts. The Ark provides a safe and welcoming atmosphere for all people to listen to, learn about, perform and share music.*"

Now in its 45th year, The Ark is considered one of the top music clubs in the world, known for the quality and breadth of its programming. You name them, they've played here, from Allison Krauss, to Leon Redbone, the venue hosts live music more than 300 nights each year (!), and this year the program includes the Kruger Brothers. ►

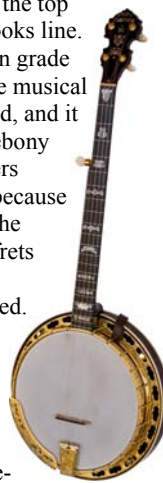
The Kruger Brothers appear at the The Ark in Ann Arbor, MI, on February 11.

Reading

The Deering Jens Kruger model banjo

The following is an excerpt from the Deering catalogue copy for the Tenbrooks/Kruger model banjo. Some interesting things here about the instrument ... and some surprising things about Jens.

"The Jens Kruger is the top model of the Tenbrooks line. It is made with violin grade maple because of the musical qualities of this wood, and it features a radiused ebony fretboard. Jens prefers stainless steel frets because of the durability of the stainless steel. The frets wear longer before needing to be replaced. Before switching to stainless steel frets, Jens, who plays an average of eight hours per day, was having his banjos re-fretted every six months. With stainless steel frets he has played for almost two years before having the banjo re-fretted; getting three times the playing life out of the frets!" ►



Deering celebrates 35th anniversary at NAMM

It's been 35 years since Deering began in earnest in the banjo business, and they celebrated at the NAMM conference by unveiling the 35th Anniversary Model Deering, which Greg describes as the most beautiful banjo he has ever made.

There were other reasons to celebrate at NAMM, too. Aside from having a great showing, they were given an award by the Musical Merchandise Review in recognition of their contribution to the industry. It's a nice honor for a great company, and the wonderful people behind it. ►



On the Web

How fun is this? Laura Boosinger and the KBs with the Patsy Cline classic, "I Love You So Much, It Hurts Me":

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyAq6kV5G2g>

Laura singing and playing Jens' banjo on "Lord, Build Me a Cabin":

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwRBUSNjKlI&feature=related>

Here are some nice clips from the recent dates at the Cook Shack. Nicky Sanders of the Steep Canyon Rangers adds some beautiful fiddle to "Carolina in the Fall":

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3eV7HWCQBA>

Si Kahn joined them for Wild Rose of the Mountain:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OP27b_OF1gg

Zeb Snyder tears it up on "I Know you Rider":

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_RgFv8HTB0

To access these videos, click the link or copy/paste it into your browser.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The KBs attended the **Folk Alliance** conference in Memphis in mid-February, in part to back up **Si Kahn**, who's album *Courage* was voted the album of the year, and the song "Peace Will Rise" the song of the year. The KBs also hosted workshops and a range of performances during the festival. (See full story this page.) • Literally as you read this, the recording of the **Appalachian Concerto** continues in earnest. It will be wrapping up in about two weeks time, and release of the CD is planned for April. • If you need another excuse to go to Merlefest this year, then this might be it: the KBs will be performing the **Appalachian Concerto at Merlefest** with the Green Mountain Strings. It's at 5pm in the Walker Center on Saturday, April 30. • The KBs are featured this month on *Our State* magazine's "Month of Music" web feature celebrating the strength and diversity of North Carolina musicians. • Recording and production is underway for **Si Kahn's new CD**, and it will also feature Jens' production and instrumentation. The disc, yet to be named, will be out this coming spring. • There is lots of radio airplay these days following on the success of *Forever and a Day* and the showcases at the Folk Alliance conference. An example: "Forever and a Day" reached **#4 on the charts** in February at WGLT-FM Normal, IL 89.1, Peoria, IL, 103.5 FM. ►

On the Road

On the 11th, they play the Historic Douglas Theatre in **Macon, GA**.
On the 12th they're at the Townsend Center for the Performing Arts at the University of West Georgia in **Carrollton, GA**.

Submissions

If you've got a good story, some interesting news, trivia, a great photo ... we'd love to hear from you. Send stories, photos or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca



Maynard Holbrook picked up the Kruger Brothers at the airport prior to their first appearance at Merlefest, and he's been "on the bus" ever since. Dan Shearer profiles Maynard on page 2.

News

Krugers make a splash at Folk Alliance

If there is a Super Bowl of folk music, then the Folk Alliance conference is it. An annual gathering of folk music DJs, journalists, artists and producers from throughout North America, the 2011 conference was held this past February in Memphis, TN. The Kruger brothers were on the performance schedule every day of the event, including backing Si Kahn at the gala awards ceremony.

"It was our first appearance at the Folk Alliance," says Uwe, "and it was the greatest introduction that we could have hoped for."

"Hardly anybody gets to play for everybody," as artists more typically perform for smaller groups spread out over the four days of the

conference. Playing behind Si, and getting recognition for the production of his disc, shone a unique light on the band, netting a lot of interest from promoters and industry professionals. But of course they shone their own light, too, and their reception, especially after the initial gala, was tremendous. ►

Feature

The Irrepressible Si Kahn

He's got an award-winning album and a new musical. Not bad for a retiree, is it?

by Glen Herbert

"There is a reason I start with a song about a Labrador retriever who thinks he can fly," says Si Kahn about his latest collection, *Courage*. "Because one of the ways we can live this life richly is by attempting the impossible."

If that's the measure, then Kahn's life in music and social activism has definitely been a rich one. His musical education began in the 60's on the front lines of the Civil Rights movement, where he first got the idea to play guitar and sing. This year, his album *Courage* was named album of

the year, and "Peace Will Rise" song of the year at the Folk Alliance conference, coming in ahead of stars like Bob Dylan and Judy Collins.

"At the beginning I was totally naive," he says. "I went south to the southern civil rights movement because all the cool people were going south."

There was a lot to impress a person in those days looking for cool stuff. What he found was a cause and also a way to express it: songs and singing.

"Singing together can help people prepare to act and take risks," Kahn writes in his recent book, *Creative Community Organizing: A guide for rabble rousers*. "It can change our hearts, and reinforce our willingness to act in the face of fear and danger."

He writes that many of the songs associated with the civil rights movement "reached us in a deep, personal way, even though they are in a sense a language we do not completely understand, a language that can only be translated by the heart."

"The great political songs connect us across time. Who can stand swaying in a circle with arms linked, singing 'We Shall Overcome,' and not be taken back to the Movement and to the South, whether they were



Backing up Si Kahn at Folk Alliance 2011, Memphis, TN. (Photo: Neale Eckstein)

there in person or in spirit, whether they were even yet born?"

When he took up the guitar he sought to use song in the same way: to resolve people to action, to connect them, to reinforce a willingness to face their fears, and to touch their emotions. And in the 40-plus years since then, he's pressed 16 albums and has written songs that would be recorded by artists ranging from Eddi Reader and Thomas Dolby to Hazel Dickens. ("Aragon Mill" is perhaps the most covered, and is available on iTunes in nearly 30 different versions.) He has shared stages and CDs with Pete Seeger, he's lectured on the politics of country music, taught organizing, and songwriting. He's recently completed a musical, *Silver Spoon*, that will premier in Boston this May.

Nevertheless, he has always thought of his music as a sideline to his work as a community organizer. He calls it his "hobby that got out of hand."

"Somebody once said to me, you know, if you had just been a musician, just been a songwriter, think of how many more songs you would have had time to write. And I say, yeah, but what would they have been about? In my songwriting, I've been documenting what these people were like, what their work was like, what their communities were like, what their lives were like. So, sure, if I hadn't been an organizer I wouldn't have had those stories. And probably if I hadn't been a musician I wouldn't have been as effective as an organizer."

Courage follows in kind. It is a collection of songs about people, many of whom he knows through his community work. "It's really a thank you to everyone from whom I learned what courage means." ►

Reading

Kudos from NCPR

Barb Heller, DJ at NCPR and Folk Alley, chose Forever and a Day as her top album pick of 2010. This is an excerpt from what she had to say in support of her choice:

"These beautiful, mostly original arrangements make less of the showmanship and more of their musicality. These guys are capable of playing the fingers off a roomful of great players, yet they hold back and concentrate on bringing out the best in their music." ►

Profile

Maynard Holbrook

A little story of how an airport pick up can lead to singing on stage with a symphony orchestra. Well, ok, maybe it's two stories ...

by Dan Shearer



Four chairs on stage signals to audiences waiting for a Kruger Brother concert in North Carolina that they're in for a treat. It means that

Maynard Holbrook will be invited on stage to add his "high lonesome" tenor voice to the performance. And when he's introduced, a heartfelt round of applause fills the venue.

Uwe says that when he first met and heard Maynard sing, he wondered in awe what he, Uwe, was doing in a country where locals sang so beautifully. It's a story that has now entered into Kruger lore: Maynard was riding shotgun in the van that carried the Kruger Brothers from Charlotte to Wilkesboro in 1997 for the band's first appearance at MerleFest. During the ride, when Jens and Uwe tuned their instruments and then broke into a song, Maynard offered to sing a tune "in the key of C please."

Earlier, Maynard tipped his hand when he told Jens at the airport that he "sang a little" and that he got his music from Uncle Jim Shumate. Jens' eyes got big then he said, "Jim Shumate is your uncle? Wow, I grew up listening to Jimmy on records, playing fiddle with Flatt and Scruggs."

But the Krugers weren't prepared for what they heard when Maynard "auditioned" with "Gone, Gone, Gone" on that historical ride to Wilkesboro. The experience set the bonds, both musical and personal, between Maynard and the band.

Maynard (who met his future wife Hilda at a hootenanny in 1964 and whose marriage, after he returned from Vietnam, inspired the song "Appalachian Mist") has played guitar since age fourteen when he and his younger sister Lana started singing harmony together.

After graduating high school, and with the addition of Lana's husband, they formed The Gospel Tone Trio and for about fifteen years traveled between North Carolina, Virginia and South Carolina to perform at churches and special occasions. In 1971, the trio recorded an album,

Family Bible, which is often on sale at Kruger Brother concerts.

While Maynard had his own bluegrass band for another fifteen years, he first performed with the Kruger Brothers when they returned for their second engagement at MerleFest. The guys were playing at a local elementary school when Maynard was invited to join them in what Maynard fondly remembers as his first song on stage with the Kruger Brothers, "Rocky Top."

Since then Maynard, whose in-home music center is surrounded by Kruger Brothers photos and memorabilia, has toured with the band in Switzerland, Canada, and throughout the United States; he has been featured on both *Scrapbook* CDs; and he has produced his own 2008 album, *Maynard and Friends at the Cook Shack*. These days when he's not on stage with the KBs, you can either find him there at the Cook Shack jamming every Saturday morning or in the new Double Time studio working with Jens on another CD to be released later this year.

What's it like to play with the Kruger Brothers? "It's like a dream come true. I never in my life dreamed I'd get to go and perform in Switzerland, Canada, Maine. I'd have never gotten to go to those places if it weren't for those guys."

Those of us fortunate enough to attend the premier of "Music From the Spring" in Bangor will never forget Maynard's performance in front of a symphony orchestra. In another piece of KBs lore, he wasn't told that he would be invited on stage for fear his predictable nervousness would keep him from enjoying the performance. Nor was he allowed to attend the special rehearsal with the orchestra where they practiced Jens' arrangement of "Amazing Grace" in anticipation of featuring Maynard on stage. The only tip off might have been Hilda telling him to wear a suit, which is not Maynard's standard garb.

Nevertheless, Maynard was entirely surprised by the request to come on stage for the encore. He was "literally shaking," and not the shaking he does when he hams up the Elvis part of "Working on a Building." He says that when Uwe "leaned over and whispered in my ear 'Maynard, calm down and sing it like you always do,'" he was able to steel himself to pull off one of his best renditions of that crowd favorite.

"In Switzerland I used to read about people like Maynard, Americans whose music is a way of



life for them," remembers Uwe. "There is a humbleness about the way Maynard embraces gospel music, a medium to truly express his feelings, not a platform to showcase. Maynard sings because his soul needs it, and it gives him peace of mind."

Maynard always wanted to own a Martin guitar, but it had been out of his reach until in 2001 when at a BBQ festival the Kruger Brothers presented him with a 1974 D-18. To this day Maynard keeps it tuned and ready-to-play in his basement music center. Maynard won't hesitate to show you the Martin and the special inscription inside, written in appreciation by the Kruger Brothers.

"Those guys have the biggest hearts of anybody I know," says Maynard, who tells them affectionately and with high praise, "You guys are nothing but good ole country boys, but from another county. You're just like us." ►

Kruger Swiss Army knives!

It's the real deal: Victorinox Swiss Army Classic pocket knives in Kruger green with the Swiss army logo on one side and the KB logo on the other. Sweet! There are only 40 of them, so they won't be around long. They're available through the online store.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The recording of the **Appalachian Concerto** is in the can and will be released later this month. The disc features the Kevin Lawrence 1st Violin, Stephanie Ezerman 2nd Violin, Sheila Browne Viola, and Alex Ezerman Cello. • During Merlefest, the KBs will be shadowed on the Friday and Saturday by a film crew capturing live footage and interviews for a piece to air on **Swiss TV, SRG SSR**, the national broadcaster of Switzerland. • Issue #21 of the **Fretboard Journal** should be hitting the stands right about now, and in it you'll find an interview feature on **Tut Taylor**, dobro legend and Kruger Brothers #1 fan. • The countdown to **Merlefest** is on, with the festival taking place at the end of this month in Wilkesboro, NC. On the Friday during the festival the KBs play the Creekside Stage at noon and the Walker Center at 3:45. On the Saturday they're at the Watson Stage at 1:00 and will present the **Appalachian Concerto** at 5:00 in the Walker Center. On Sunday they close out the Hillside Stage with a set at 1:30. In addition, Jens will appear alongside Bob Carlin at the banjo workshop on Friday afternoon at 1:45 in the Mayes Pit. • There are lots of new dates on the calendar for the summer months, including two great opportunities to attend workshops featuring the KBs: **Steve Kaufman's Music Kamp** on June 19 and **RockyGrass Academy** July 24-28 in Lyons, CO, just north of Boulder. ►

On the Road

The KBs begin the month in sunny **Flagstaff, AZ**, with a performance of *Music From the Spring* with the **Flagstaff Symphony** on the 8th. On the 9th, it's an Evening with the Kruger Brothers at the Orpheum Theater in Flagstaff. On the 10th they are at **Sun City, AZ**, for an outdoor concert at the **Sun Bowl**. Then, it's back home to prep for **Merlefest**, Wilkesboro, NC, the first big festival of the summer season. The KBs are featured at the festival on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, April 28-May 1.



Around Jens' kitchen table are Uwe, Adam Steffey, Bobby Hicks, Jens, and Joel playing upright. Hicks is an iconic fiddler, a mentor to many, and a great friend and fan of the Kruger Brothers. He is profiled by Dan Shearer below.

Summer dates added in Switzerland, UK, Canada

A short Swiss tour has been added to the May schedule, and it includes dates in Altdorf, Zurich, Laufen, and Uitikon. Sales were brisk when the tickets went on sale, and two dates are now virtually sold out. The date in Laufen is part of an ongoing series, Bluegrass in Basel, which brings acts like Rhonda Vincent, Steep Canyon Rangers, and the Kruger Brothers to a very appreciative and enthusiastic Swiss audience.

On the way home from Switzerland the band will make a short stop in the UK for a show on May 28 at the Eagle Music Shop in West Yorkshire, UK. The KBs are favorites of the shop, and have lots of YouTube clips from concerts and workshops there to prove it. A bit of interesting trivia: despite being in England, and despite being in a rural setting, the Eagle Music Shop is the #1 Deering retailer in the world, selling more Deering banjos, year after year, than any other retailer, anywhere.

One other international date this summer, and that's the Little Lake Musicfest in Peterborough, Ontario. The Krugers are favorites of the festival, formerly known as the Festival of Lights. They are in Peterborough on August 10. ►

Puzzler

So you think you know Joel?

In the list below, all the statements are true of Joel, except one. Think you can spot the false statement? Email your guess to glenherbert@sympatico.ca and correct responses will be put into a draw for a free copy of the **Appalachian Concerto** disc, which will be released later this month. Remember, only *one* of these is false. Everything else is true. Really.

Joel ...

1. is tri-lingual
2. appeared on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson
3. won the National Junior Harmonica Championship
4. is a licensed EMT
5. drove limousine in NYC
6. was a late-night radio DJ in Stowe Vermont
7. is ambidextrous
8. was a production assistant on the movie *Porky's II: The Next Day*
9. worked as a flooring salesman
10. is the brother of a producer for the Pointer Sisters
11. was a student of the late, great Milt Hinton
12. was a security supervisor at Zurich airport

Profile

Bobby Hicks brings it all back home

He's played everywhere, with everyone, and is quite literally an elder statesman of bluegrass music. These days, though, you're just as likely to find Bobby Hicks at a coffee shop playing with friends, which is where Dan Shearer and his wife Kathryn caught up with him.

by Dan Shearer



Kathryn and I met Bobby at Zuma Coffee, a popular coffee bar and restaurant in "downtown" Marshall, NC, where every

Thursday night Bobby sponsors a bluegrass jam. You might expect a crowd waiting for the music to turn its collective head in awe when a country/bluegrass legend, a fiddler who played with Bill Monroe in the 1950's then for twenty-five years with Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder, walks in. But Bobby, a humble man who has lived in Marshall for only three years, has become a familiar face to the citizens of this small town on the French

Broad River, and he was greeted with only friendship and affection.

If a bluegrass instrument has strings, Bobby can play it—fiddle, bass, mandolin, guitar, banjo, you name it. What his website doesn't reveal is that before he began playing fiddle at the age of nine, he took up the guitar at such a young age that he couldn't hold the instrument without balancing it on a chair. And while it's public knowledge that in 1954 he was hired by Bill Monroe to play bass before switching to fiddle, it's not so well known that Bobby played banjo with the band for one week before switching to bass.

About eight years ago, when Bobby arrived at Byron Berline's Oklahoma International Bluegrass Festival without a back-up band, Byron suggested the Kruger Brothers. "Why not," thought Bobby; if Byron recommends them, they must be good. That serendipitous moment launched a lasting musical and personal relationship with the Krugers, a friendship characterized by mutual admiration.

At that festival Bobby remembers experiencing awe when he began playing "Estrellita" and Jens—who Bobby says, "continues to amaze me"—played along note for note. Since then, whenever Bobby attends a Kruger Brothers performance, be it a concert or festival venue, he and Golden Boy are invited on stage. And of course, no Kruger Brothers/Bobby Hicks performance can pass without "Estrellita."

"They're great players, all of them," exclaims Bobby about the Kruger Brothers. "And Joel amazes me, how he can keep up with them." (I reminded Bobby in jest that Joel, the keeper of the beat, might look at it the other way.)

Years ago when Bobby was playing in Las Vegas with The Judy Lynn Show, his frustration at not being able to play harmony below the lead line led him—right there in the dressing room of the Golden Nugget—to drill a hole in the peg box, insert a peg, and add a fifth string. Although there are accounts of earlier violins with five strings, Bobby came upon the idea independently out of a desire to have an instrument that could voice both the range of the violin and the viola within the context of North American fiddle styles. It's an innovation that he introduced into bluegrass music, and when we see players tearing it up with an extra string, we (and they) have Bobby Hicks to thank.

The fiddle Bobby plays to this day is a "1976 custom creation of the late Harvey Keck" and features a hand-carved human head in place of the scroll. A few years ago, when Bobby removed the top of the fiddle to inspect some damage he discovered an inscription written on the inside back near the neck block. It said, "Golden Boy", (the name of the fiddle) "built to be the greatest instrument in the world, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

You can catch Bobby at MerleFest at 3:30 PM Friday the 29th on the Watson Stage in the "Bluegrass Boys, A Tribute to Bill Monroe." ►



Bobby Hicks jamming with fans and friends at the Zuma coffee shop in Marshall, NC. Thanks to Laura Boosinger for these photos.

First Person Singular

Everybody digs Bobby Hicks

In preparing the above profile, Dan Shearer asked the KBs what they thought of Bobby Hicks. Well, he got an earful:

Joel: "Bobby is one of the finest gentlemen you would ever hope to meet in this business. His style and grace are surpassed only by his incredible musicianship. He is one of the few fiddlers who is equally adept at bluegrass as well as country. He has a wonderful sense of humor and is just a real pleasure to be around. To have someone who has spent more than five decades in the music world enjoy sharing the stage with us as much as he does is a true honor."

Uwe: "Bobby was the first fiddler I idolized when I saw him in Germany in the 80s. I saw him play with Ricky Skaggs twice, once in Frankfurt and once in Offenbach. Back then I

traveled by train and the shows were really worth the ordeal. Bobby left a lasting impression, and I started following his career. To play with him occasionally is an honor. The hard thing is to concentrate on my own playing since my ears tend to drift to Bobby's playing. It's so sweet."

Jens: "Bobby is a stylist, musically, meaning he developed licks and phrases for the country and bluegrass fiddle vocabulary. Because of his deep understanding of the nature of this music and the culture it is embedded in, he is one of the most widely imitated fiddlers of all times. "His experience as a show fiddler in Las Vegas came to full bloom in Ricky Skaggs' band where he could showcase his uncluttered statement of fiddle aesthetics. His recordings of albums with bluegrass bands including JD Crowe, Tony Rice, Jerry Douglas, Todd Phillips and Doyle Lawson gave a new life to old bluegrass classics, and his fiddling and his musicality on the violin instantly became the new standard in this traditional form of bluegrass music."

"Besides being a great fiddler, Bobby possesses a deep understanding of all of the other bluegrass instruments, which probably is why he knows so well what is going on when he is playing with the band. I personally consider myself very lucky to get the chance to occasionally learn from a master of his caliber." ►

Mailbox

Good times, Great memories

In the February newsletter I wrote about the first time I heard the Kruger Brothers. Here Warren "Doc" Grafton of Bossier City, LA, shares his own story:

"I had never heard of the Kruger Brothers until I attended an Acoustic Music Camp in Arlington, Texas in August of 2009. I enrolled in a class for flatpicking guitar, and found myself in a class taught by Uwe Kruger. Jens was teaching banjo to another class. I spent three days trying to absorb all the pearls that Uwe presented. Each night there was a performance by the faculty members, and the Krugers gave an outstanding performance. On the last day of class Jens appeared in our classroom and he and Uwe gave an impromptu mini-concert to our class

of about 10 people. It was incredible. I was especially touched by their rendition of "Leaving London," which was written by Tom Paxton. I had never before heard the song, and it moved me to tears. After returning home I quickly learned the song and now perform it from time to time, but I can never capture the way the Krugers did it." ►

Venue

A different kind of venue, a different kind of concert

There are lots of ways to enjoy music. The Blair Hill Inn in Greenville, ME, is one of them.



The summer season brings with it all those great Americana festivals, of which Merlefest is the first of the biggies of the year. The festivals are

boisterous, vibrant, fun, busy. And, yes, after three or four days it can begin to feel like you need a vacation from your vacation.

On the other hand is the Blair Hill Inn. Once a private estate, the inn is situated on an historical estate with panoramic vistas that span from New Hampshire to Canada. It was bought and restored by Dan and Ruth McLaughlin, former software developers, in order to follow their dream of being, well, innkeepers.

"We realized we had to do it, and not just dream," says Dan. "We didn't want to look back at our life and think why didn't we give that a shot?"

The result is one of the most celebrated inns in New England. The KBs have become good friends of the McLaughlins and are now regulars at the inn, playing intimate concerts in a truly one-of-a-kind setting whenever schedules allow. Literally, there you are, listening to the Krugers against a background of the sun setting into the Laurentians. The McLaughlins have the KBs there for the same reason that they built the inn: because they have a passion for it.

The KBs play the Blair Hill Inn on July 20th. ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

Uwe Kruger celebrated his 50th birthday last month. A very happy birthday to Uwe. • The CD of ***Appalachian Concerto*** is now available through the online store, Amazon, County Sales, or anywhere the KBs perform. • The **new website** is live. The look is new, as is much of the content, though the address remains the same: www.krugerbros.com • Tickets have gone on sale for the June 11 induction ceremony to mark Jens' membership in the **Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame**. • A great friend and stunning musician **Zeb Snyder** of the Snyder Family Band won the flatpicking contest at Renofest at the end of March. Congrats to Zeb! • The KBs played to a sell-out crowd of 1200 in Flagstaff on April 8th. Joining forces with the **Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra** to present Music From the Spring, the performance gained a prolonged standing ovation and was described as the highlight of the orchestra's season. ►



Uwe and Rebecca at Uwe's 50th birthday celebration held on the campus of Wilkes Community College. They were joined by friends and family and, of course, there was lots and lots of music. See full story page 2. *Photo courtesy Skip Vetter.*

On the Road

The KBs are literally all over the map during the month of May: They kick off the month on the heels of Merlefest with at date at Rudy's Bluegrass in the Woods in **Anderson, SC**, on the 7th. On the 8th it's "An Evening with the Kruger Brothers" hosted at the Chapel of Rest Church in **Happy Valley, NC**. On the 12th they begin a week at the Silver Dollar City Bluegrass and BBQ Festival in **Branson, MO**, and they are in residence there through the 15th. At the end of the month they're off to Europe for the Acoustic Guitar Meeting in **Sarzana, Italy**, on the 20th, and then a quick hop to **Switzerland** for four dates there: **Altdorf** on the 21st, **Zurich** on the 22nd, **Laufen** on the 24th and **Uitikon** on the 25th. Then, it's another puddle jump to **West Yorkshire, UK**, for a workshop and show on the 28th at the Eagle Music Shop, Britain's premiere banjo retailer. (Yes, Britain really does have a premiere banjo retailer.)

Jens to be inducted to the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame

Jens to be awarded membership in June 11 ceremony.

It's home to Doc Watson, Earl Scruggs, the Carter Family, the Stanley Brothers, and now the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame will be home to Jens Kruger as well. Jens will be inducted on June 11 at the Stone Center in North Wilkesboro, NC.

The Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame was created to honor those involved in music in the Greater Blue Mountains area, which runs from north Georgia to northern Virginia.

Inductees to the hall include artists, music pioneers and songwriters as well as traditional dancers, callers, scholars, and music industry professionals.

Jens has been inducted on the basis of his outstanding musicianship and his mentorship of local musicians.

Fellow inductees this year are international recording artist Emmylou Harris, fiddler Jim Shumate (who also happens to be Maynard Holbrook's uncle),

songwriter Jim Lauderdale, and Willard Watson in the traditional dance category.

Everyone is welcome to attend the induction ceremony. For tickets call (336) 667-3171. ►

Appalachian Concerto CD launched at MerleFest

For all of us who missed the world premiere in November, the studio recording of the ***Appalachian Concerto*** is here. The recording was launched over the weekend at Merlefest and the piece was also featured there in a live performance.



The new website is live!

We're pleased to announce a new look and lots of new content for the KBs online presence.

The new website went live last month. Of the new things introduced on the site, here are some of the highlights:

Uwe's Photos: Uwe is a wonderful photographer and his images shed a unique light on what it is like to spend your working life on the road as a touring musician. For a selection of his shots from the road, see the Photos tab.

Newsletters: All the past newsletters are now archived on the site. See the second heading on the News pull-down tab.

News: We'll be updating the site with news and information relating to new dates, special events, releases, as well as information that we feel should be shared. See the News panel on the homepage as well as the News tab.

Sound clips: The Music tab will host a number of full length sound clips as well as samples of new recordings whenever they become available. ►

Milestones

Uwe's 50th!

Uwe celebrated the milestone birthday in style—friends, family, and lots of music

by Dan Shearer

Uwe's 50th birthday party was held on April 17th at Wilkes Community College, home to MerleFest (with the tents already standing in prep for the 2011 festival). By the time friends and family arrived bearing a collection of covered dishes, Philip had set up the sound system. There were many familiar faces among the guests, but perhaps most notably was eighty-seven year old Tut Taylor accompanied by his wife, Lee, his son David and his wife Linda as well as their two sons ... three generations of Taylors.

The guests had hardly put their forks down when Uwe, Jens, Joel picked their instruments up and began with "Up18North." (Where else can you go to a birthday party and discover that the birthday boy is part of the entertainment?) After Joel's longtime friend, drummer Lou Mondelli, was invited to join them, the guys moved into a country and western feel with Jens playing the electric guitar more often than banjo.

The main event began after the band took a break. It featured Uwe who, after blowing out the candles on his birthday cake decorated with a guitar, sat in the middle of the hall, opening presents and cards one-by-one, accompanied by the sound of laughter from the hall, evoked mostly by Uwe's alert and humorous comments on each gift.

Then back to the music, this time with the addition of fiddler Bobby Hicks, the high lonesome voice of Maynard Holbrook, and Laura Boosinger with her banjo and vocal harmony. A special treat featured David Taylor and Maynard singing "Two Little Boys," David's signature song, followed by David taking center stage to lead the guests in the Hokey Pokey.

And after everyone thought the party was over and many guests had already left, there they were, the musicians huddled in a circle, jamming away.

We all know that playing and singing is much more than a vocation for these guys; they simply love doing what they do and will continue to, long after the dust settles on an event. ►

Puzzler

"So you think you know Joel?" contest winner!



The best man at his parents' wedding was Lou Teicher of Ferrante and Teicher. His brother is a professional musician whose musical partner is a licensed mortician who appeared on *The Beverly Hillbillies* and whose father co-wrote "Please Release Me." Joel's mother was scheduled to be one of the original Little Rascals but came down with Scarlet Fever shortly before filming and was unable to take part. Joel himself has been a travel agent, played bass for Doc Watson, and voiced a radio ad for Harold's Restaurant—all things that didn't even make the list included in the last issue. Below is a review of that list based on an interview with Joel:

Joel is tri-lingual ...

English, Spanish, and German. If you think of Swiss German as a separate language, then he's quad-lingual.

... was National Junior Harmonica Champion ...

"During the summer of 1971 I was going to a day camp and the harmonica contest was offered at the day camp. Anybody could sign up for it so I picked up a harmonica, and won. ... [I advanced] to the national contest. You just had to send them a tape of you playing. A couple of weeks later I received a telegram saying congratulations you've been selected as a finalist in the Choo Choo Charlie national harmonica contest sponsored by Hohner Harmonica Company and Good 'N Plenty candy.

"The contest was being held in New York at Tavern on the Green. The guy who competed against me came from somewhere in Ohio. At the contest we got together and played a little bit and I saw that he was a much, much better player than me. He blew me away, and I thought, OK, so much for this. So we drew straws to see who would go first, and he went first. And he gets up and half-way through his performance he screws up, he makes some mistakes, and he quit. He just walked off. So I get up. I play my thing, and I played a couple of bum notes here and there,

but I kept going all the way to the end. And because I persevered, they gave me the win even though he was a better player."

... appeared on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson ...

It was as the national harmonica champion (as above) that he appeared on the Tonight Show in September of 1971.

... is a licensed EMT ...

Yup. He is. He is also a volunteer with the Wilkes County rescue squad.

... drove a limo in NYC ...

"I was in between jobs and just needed to do something to make some money. ... I once had to drive Richard Gere to the airport. He comes out of his house at 11:30 for a 12:00 flight ... I got him there in 20."

... worked as a flooring salesman ...

"... my uncle had purchased a floor maintenance supply store. When I was 15, 16, 17, I used to work part time there with my cousin."

... was a late-night radio DJ in Stowe, Vermont ...

"I was heavily involved with the college radio station while I was a student at Hunter college. A friend's father owned a ski resort in Stowe, and on one of the trips up to Stowe I stopped into the radio station and spoke with the owner. I just told him, if you ever need anybody, I'd be interested. Sure enough, two months later I get a call from him saying if you still want the job there's one available. So I decided to take a leave of absence from university (which I am technically still on) and went up for the job."

It was 1980, WRFB in Stowe Vermont. He was on air from 4 to midnight, Monday through Friday.

... is the brother of a producer for the Pointer Sisters ...

Norman Landsberg was associate producer and vocal arranger for the Pointer Sisters. He's had a long career in the music industry, including a piano show that he tours. He is also Manny Moka, leader of a latin jazz/funk.

... was production assistant on the film Porky's II ...

"... when I lived in Manhattan my next-door neighbor was a film producer and had worked on the first Porky's film. When it came time to

do the sequel I convinced him to hire me on.

"I also worked on *The Christmas Story*, which was produced by the same people who had done *Porky's*."

... was a security supervisor at Zurich airport ...

"When I first moved to Switzerland in 1989, I took a job with Pan-Am as a ticket counter agent. Without a doubt, one of the most stressful gigs I've had. During the 6 month probationary period, I decided to quit that job and go to work for their security company which was a subsidiary. After Pan-Am went bankrupt, the directors of the security division started their own private security firm. I went to work for them and subsequently became a trainer for all of their new hires. We worked for Delta, Emirates, Cathay Pacific, and several other airlines that serviced Zurich Airport doing everything from document checks and passenger screening to aircraft search and baggage control."

... was a student of legendary jazz bassist Milt Hinton.

When Joel was a student at Hunter College he signed up for the jazz workshop, which Milt Hinton was teaching. "He and I hit it off immediately ... he took me under his wing and became my mentor, and for the next 30 years he was one of the most influential people in my life."

And the winner is ...

Joel is *not* ambidextrous, so that was the false entry on the list. The winner of the draw is **Joe Wolkowicz** of Ronks, PA. He wins a copy of the *Appalachian Concerto* CD. Congrats!

First Person Singular**What did you learn from Milt Hinton?**

Joel: "Milt taught me that the most important thing has nothing to do with your race, religion, or the color of your skin; that we're all on this world together and what matters is what comes from your heart; and that you should be honest with yourself and everyone around you." ►



The Krüger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments, ideas, or just hellos to glenherbert@sympatico.ca or via the web at www.glenherbert.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbrothers.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The Kruger Brothers were filmed and interviewed at MerleFest by Tilman Lingner of **Swiss National Television**. The resulting story aired on May 18 on one of the most viewed newscasts in Switzerland: *10vor10*, a program with a format similar to *60 Minutes*. The clip is posted to the KB homepage. • **Steve Spurgin's latest CD, *Past Perfect***, is now available and features Jens and Uwe throughout. • The KBs were featured guests on two great radio shows last month: **WDAV's *Biscuits & Bach*** on Sunday, May 22, and **NPR's *Bluegrass Breakdown*** with Dave Higgs on May 28. You can still catch the clips on both station sites. • The Krugers have been added to the lineup for **Wintergrass**, the premier indoor Americana festival. See full story below. • A long awaited **tour of the Northwest**, perhaps including Alaska, is in the works ... If you are out west and have longed to have a Kruger event close to home, tell us where you are by emailing glenherbert@sympatico.ca. • There's a very nice video profile of **Tut Taylor**, Krugers' #1 Fan, at the *Fretboard Journal* website. See <http://www.fretboardjournal.com/video> Taylor was also the subject of a feature in last month's issue of *Bluegrass Unlimited*. See Bill Conger's article "Southern Filibuster: A salute to pioneer Tut Taylor." • **Si Kahn's** new musical comedy, *Silver Spoon*, is currently in premiere in Cambridge, MA, at the Nora Theatre Company until June 19. ►



There was lots of fun again this year at Silver Dollar City. Carol Gerdes writes, "We had four days of concerts to enjoy and some of us sat through record highs, record lows and rain ... [but] as you can tell from the picture we're not just energized—we're Krugerized!" Pictured with the KBs are members of the Kruger Brothers Fan Club.

Jens and Uwe guest on Steve Spurgin's *Past Perfect*



There are lots of familiar sounds on the latest solo outing from

bluegrass veteran and Byron Berline & California alumnus Steve Spurgin. Jens and Uwe appear throughout the album, titled *Past Perfect*, and avid Kruger fans won't need to look far to find some signature licks. The banjo on "Fire on the Kettle" and "Run Away Home" in particular is unmistakable. "I Guess She'll Never Know" is perhaps a rarity in that it includes Jens and Uwe trading guitar solos.

Past Perfect includes ten Spurgin originals plus John Malcolm Penn's "Sasquatch" and Gordon Lightfoot's "Song for a Winter's Night." On the album Jens and Uwe join a who's who of all-star players including dobro ace Rob Ickes, mandolinist Adam Steffey and bassist Rusty Holloway. The collection is now available on iTunes and elsewhere.

Another rousing return to Branson

The Kruger Brothers are perennial favorites at the BBQ and Bluegrass Festival held each year at Silver Dollar City in Branson, MO. The weather, well, wasn't the greatest this year, but the fans—many of whom make the trek to Branson annually—were undeterred.

Highlights? "That's always a little hard to pinpoint," says Carol Gerdes. "They are so generous with their time—they stay and talk until the last person leaves ... And getting to watch them play around with 'Don't Monkey with my Widder' on stage just for Jim makes it a truly personal event for each one of us in the audience."

Wintergrass added to the tour schedule

The Kruger Brothers are going to Wintergrass! Held in the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Bellevue, WA, it's everything a summer bluegrass festival is ... except not in the summer ... and not outside. Wintergrass is a family-friendly bluegrass music festival held indoors but otherwise with all the bells and

whistles of any great festival: there are four stages, workshops, impromptu jams, and lots of great music. It's the perfect antidote to a long, cold winter. The Kruger Brothers are delighted to have been added to the stellar line-up for the 2012 festival to be held over the last weekend in February, the 23rd through the 26th.

KBs on WDAV FM's *Biscuits and Bach*

If you missed the live broadcast, you can still go online to hear the Kruger Brothers talking with Rachel Stewart about two things they know a lot about: music and food. On May 22, they were the featured guests on *Biscuits & Bach* a weekly radio show which airs on WDAV, Davidson, NC. Topics for discussion included the Kruger family restaurant where the brothers first learned to cook ... for lots and lots of people. The four-hour program features music from the Renaissance to the Baroque and beyond, and that "beyond" is where the Kruger Brothers come in. You can access the archived interview at the following URL: (http://www.wdav.org/1_186_0.cfm?do=view&id=222)

On the Road

Just back from the European tour, and after a short breather, the KBs will perform at the **Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame** induction ceremony on the 11th. Jens is being inducted to the Hall at the event. On the 16th there is a date at the Old Historical Ebbs Chapel School in Mars Hill, NC. Then it's down to Tennessee June 19 to 24 to instruct and pick with fans at the **Steve Kaufman Music Kamp**. The KBs return to the **Stecoah Valley Arts Center, Robbinsville, NC**, on the 25th.

Profile

Josh Day

He's that extra bit of the Kruger sound, namely the percussion on Forever and a Day and in select live performances. Here Dan Shearer profiles Day, drummer extraordinaire and Wilkes County native.

by Dan Shearer

I caught up with Josh at a coffee shop in Asheville, NC, not far from where Sara Bareilles and her band, which includes Josh on drums, recently performed as part of their worldwide tour. Josh, who has been playing with Sara off and on for eight years was, as always, wearing his signature cadet hat.

Growing up in Wilkesboro and graduating from nearby ASU with a Music Ed & Percussion degree and planning to be a band teacher, Josh spent most of his free time playing with various local rock & roll and blues bands. But after a less than rewarding student teaching experience Josh headed for Europe with blues guitarist Robert Ross. Believe in coincidence? Bear in mind that Josh had met the Kruger Brothers for the first time just before he went on tour with Ross. As he was about to enter Mahogany Hall in Berne, Switzerland, Josh noticed in amazement that Ross' poster was placed right next to one promoting the Kruger Brothers who were booked at the Hall at a later date.

In 2002, Josh left graduate school in North Carolina to pursue a performing and teaching career in Los Angeles, where he first met Sara Bareilles and where he lived for seven years. In fact, it was at his

Wilkesboro "going away concert" for family and friends that Uwe saw Josh perform for the first time. The next day Uwe reported to Jens, "Here's our drummer. If we ever need a drummer in America, I just found one, someone we can trust musically."

Since that time, Josh has performed with the Kruger Brothers at a variety of settings, including RockyGrass and the band's 2009 European tour. He played drums (well, really a cardboard box, but he did it brilliantly) on *Carolina Scrapbook Vol. 2* and more recently on *Forever and a Day*.

But perhaps the greatest distinction that Josh has enjoyed with the Kruger Brothers was playing with them and the Bangor Symphony Orchestra at the 2007 premier of *Music from the Spring*.

"Those guys have taught me so much about music, friendship, love, happiness, and peace," says Josh. "It's like a special magic when we play together, whether it be on stage with my drum set or on a back porch with a cardboard box."

"And when you see them perform, it will change your life. It doesn't matter if you're a professional musician or not, they deeply move you. I consider them brothers and know that we'll be in each other's lives forever."

That feeling is mutual—Uwe describes Josh as "playing with sensitivity, imagination, and fearlessness. He doesn't compromise."

And while Uwe appreciates how Josh "synchronizes with us," as Jens has said, "He is not a metronome and he doesn't wait; he follows my intention, and he understands the subtle textures, rhythms, and melody

of music." After talking with Josh, Uwe, and Jens, all separately, and noting their mutual expressions of admiration, it's clear that these guys are meant to play together.

Josh now lives in Nashville. "Why? Because I've always wanted to. But Wilkesboro will always be my home, and it doesn't matter if I'm playing on stage with Sara in Australia or in Jens' living room, I'm living a dream." So while Josh has traveled the world, his heart remains in Wilkesboro, an advantage which according to Jens leaves Josh with "an understanding of American roots music." Or as Uwe puts it, "Josh grew up with Doc's music." ►

First Person Singular

What's it like to live and work as one third of a trio?



Uwe: "For me music is a form of communication. I can play alone, but I'd rather play with other people because that's what music is all

about. An ensemble gives you the security that family can give you. It [can be] a hard thing to keep together. We all read different books, watch different movies, and we have all these different backgrounds. But to practice this openness, a collegial atmosphere really, it's a wonderful thing to be in the middle of and to have all these resources at your fingertips. If I have a question about anything, I can go to my band mates. If I have a problem, I can go to them with it, if I find something beautiful, I can share it with them. It gives me a sense that I'm a part of a bigger entity, and that's a good feeling." ►

Mailbox

Feeling Kruger withdrawal ...

Bill Ray from Wickenburg, AZ, wrote us about the Silver Dollar City shows, where apparently even standing in line is a lot of fun:

"It is Monday morning, and I am feeling withdrawal. The Kruger Brothers have given my wife and I a high for the past four days, and again we didn't miss a single performance. We travel from Wickenburg, Arizona each year to attend these performances [at the

Silver Dollar City BBQ and Bluegrass Festival in Branson, MO] and I can't tell you how uplifting it is to sit and listen to these three great musicians. When the first concert is over, we get back in line and wait for the next, which is about an hour and a half wait. This week we were in line with two couples that we had met in Branson before, and then had seen out in Flagstaff, AZ, for a performance of *Music from the Spring*. [We also met up with familiar faces from past summers, including] one couple from Nebraska, and one couple from Iowa, and then made wonderful new friends, also from Iowa. The Fan Club social gathering was an opportunity for stories to be told, visiting to take place, and singing with our favorite artists." ►

Reading

Gained in Translation

They don't call Italian a romance language for nothing ...

In May the KBs performed at the Sarzana Guitar Meeting in Sarzana, Italy. Afterward someone posted a video of the performance of "Beautiful Nothing" to youtube, setting it under a translation of the title into Italian which read: "Il Silenzio è la tela su cui ricama il musicista." Translated back into English, that means "Silence is the canvas on which to embroider music." How nice is that? You can view the clip from Sarzana at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmD0-pxRjNE>

In the Press

From Larry Clark's review of the Appalachian Concerto in the Hickory Daily Record, Hickory, NC:

"I've never been so moved as I was with the *Appalachian Concerto*. ... The concerto invoked every joyous, breathless emotion one can have." ►

Pass it on!

If you know of someone who might be interested in the *KB Newsletter*, pass it along. Past issues are also archived on the website, at the Newsletters tab.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or ideas, to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



Copyright 2010 Skip Vetter

Josh Day, shown here during a stop on the KBs Christmas tour of Switzerland, December 2010. Photo courtesy Skip Vetter.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

Jens was inducted to the **Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame** (see story below). • Some new dates have been added to the schedule, including an Aug. 14 concert in **Hamilton, Ontario**; an event as part of the acclaimed Ewell Concert Series as sponsored by William and Mary College in **Williamsburg, VA**, on October 29. For a full concert listing, see the "Shows" tab on the website at <http://www.krugerbrothers.com/concerts>

• The Kruger Brothers crossed paths with **Mike Marshall** and **Beppe Gambetta** to great acclaim at the recent Acoustic Guitar Meeting in Sarzana, Italy. You can find pictures of the event, including a shot of the castle it was held in on the news page of the KB website. • It was another another great year at the **Kaufman Kamp!** The music instruction camp is held through each summer, and this year Uwe, Joel, and Jens were instructors during bluegrass week, June 19-25. The camp features intensive workshops as well as evening concerts by the instructors. Photos have been posted to the camp website at acoustic-kamp.com. •

On the Road

They are east ... and west ... and east ... and then west again this month: The KBs begin the month in **Sugar Grove, NC**, at Music Fest 'n Sugar Grove. A festival honoring the influence of Doc Watson, the Krugers are there for the duration, July 8 and 9. Then it's a really quick trip out west for a show on the 11th at the Bluegrass in Paradise festival in **Crested Butte, CO**. And then back for two evens in Maine: in **Greenville, ME**, you can catch them at the (stunning, fabulous, breathtaking) Blair Hill Inn on the night of the 20th, and on 22nd at the festival that dares to be different, the Ossipee Valley Music Festival, in **Hiram, ME**. Then it's west again for the RockyGrass Academy on from the 25th to the 28th, followed by a day at the RockyGrass festival in the 30th, both events held in **Lyons, CO**.



Uwe's Collings D2H Brazilian triple-A, Vintage. "It really is my daily bread and butter tool," says Uwe. "And after all the music it has let me create, I'm still in love with it."

Jens inducted to Blue Ridge Hall of Fame

As we've learned to expect from a Brenda Shepherd and Family production (Carolina in the Fall), the event at the Stone Center for The Performing Arts in North Wilkesboro was very well organized. After a buffet dinner for a full house of two hundred and eighty guests, a musical set performed by each inductee was followed by an award presenter chosen for his or her special relationship with the inductee.

Presenting the honor to Jens' was the entire Shepherd family with Monica serving as spokesperson. They awarded him a trophy in recognition of his induction into the Hall of Fame in the category of Regional Musician.

During the performance portion, the Kruger Brothers opened with "Carolina in the Fall" followed by "Beautiful Nothing" (with that "could not hear a pin drop in the room" pause that defines the essence of the piece.) Then Jens finished with an expanded version of "Premonitions I-IV" that brought the house to their feet.

For many in the room the highlight of the evening was Jens' acceptance

speech. He mentioned that this was the first award he's ever received, and described the long journey he and Uwe have taken to this point in their careers. He noted the experience of growing up in Switzerland where, because they were the sons of German parents, they never really felt accepted and always felt like strangers.

He contrasted that experience with the experience of moving his family to America. In Wilkes County, he said, they immediately felt welcomed and the felt the warmth of true acceptance in the place they chose to hang their hats and call home. At long last, Jens movingly noted, he finally gets to be a local.



Robert Shepherd making the formal presentation at the Hall of Fame induction ceremony, June 11 at the Stone Family Center for the Performing Arts in North Wilkesboro, NC.

Profile

Zeb and Samantha Snyder

They're the core of the Snyder Family Band, and if you haven't heard of them yet, don't worry, you will soon. Here Dan Shearer profiles the next generation of Wilkes County musical history.

by Dan Shearer

The first time Zeb and Samantha Snyder performed on stage with the Kruger Brothers was at the 2007 Carolina in the Fall. I was there to witness this twelve and nine-year-old brother/sister act bring down the house—well actually, the hillside. And when Zeb stopped picking I remember Uwe mentioning to the crowd that the future looks very bright.

Maybe it was their mom, Laine, always "singing around the house" who got them started, but Zeb and Samantha, listening to the radio and singing along, have been fascinated by music ever since they can remember.

Zeb, now fifteen, picked up his first instrument, a mandolin (which

he still plays on stage) at age five, and Samantha, now twelve, started Suzuki violin at age three. Before taking lessons, however, Samantha “practiced” on a macaroni box with a paint stir-stick for the neck and a dowel for the bow.

After receiving general music training from Kindermusik, at age 7, Zeb began four years of classical guitar lessons while sister Samantha continued with her violin instruction. It was around this time that Zeb and Samantha started playing together, and while they occasionally sang for community service and church groups, their first real public appearance was in 2004 at the local Fresh Market. (Zeb refers to those days as, “When we were young.”)

Up to then it was all classical, but then one thing led to another. It started with a fascination with Irish fiddle music, then the eventual crossover to bluegrass—by far not the first classically trained musicians to take that big leap. For Samantha, it began with an Irish fiddling music book. For Zeb, it was a Doc Watson instructional DVD he found which absolutely “hooked me on flat picking.”

Soon, Zeb and Samantha started bluegrass lessons, then in 2006, Zeb, age 11 and Samantha 7 performed at the Cook Shack, an experience these young musicians consider their first real musical break. These days Zeb and Samantha are frequent participants at the Cook Shack Saturday morning jams.

Several years ago Zeb bought his father a bass and asked him to learn how to “fill in the gaps.” Adding Laine singing harmony, the Snyder

Family Band was born. Being invited to play at MerleFest for the last two years has been the highlight of this family band’s young career.

Zeb’s reaction after he and Samantha first met and heard the Krugers play at the Cook Shack was, “Uwe simply blew my mind—they knocked our socks off!” Now days, whenever the KBs play the Cook Shack, you can count on seeing the Snyders there, in the audience and on stage.

What’s it like playing with the Kruger Brothers? Samantha, who “has never felt more comfortable in a jam session than with the Krugers,” says, “They fire you up and make you want to play your very best. Every time I talk to them I learn about a new musician.”

“They inspire us,” says Zeb. “They fall right in with you, they fill up all the holes, and don’t overplay or simplify. It’s always fun and lighthearted, and no one’s given me as good musical advice as Jens and Uwe. They encourage us to keep open minds and listen to a variety of genres.”

Uwe agrees. He encourages these talented young musicians, “to seek out many teachers and to find as many ways as they can to use their talents to express themselves.”

Then there’s five year old Owen Snyder who sat with us in rapt attention during the interview, at one point reminding me that he was being classically trained on the guitar, and later pointing out that, “The reason you’re not interviewing me is because I haven’t played with the Kruger Brothers.”

Not yet Owen, but I’ll be back.

You can learn more about the Snyders by visiting their website at <http://www.snyderfamilyband.com/>. Their latest CD release is available online in the iTunes store. ►

First Person Singular

How do you decide which songs to present in concert?

Joel: “One of the most important things for Uwe is that he has to relate to it first personally ... we’re not doing songs about death and murder and rape and pillage. We’re trying to bring some hope and be positive about everything in life. There is so much negativity around that we take our role as entertainers seriously, to go out and just be someone who brings a little ray of sunshine ... to take people away from their trouble and worries for just a few minutes, and to give them a feeling, ... a bit of reflectiveness, and to touch people’s emotions.

Uwe puts it very well when he says that there are bands that aim for your head, that are very complicated and jazzy, with complicated chord structures and melodies; and there are other bands that aim for your feet, that want to make you dance.

What we try to do is aim somewhere in between, for the heart and the emotions, to elicit a feeling. And people, when they leave our concerts and come up to us and say that was some of the most beautiful music, or that it was one of the nicest experiences ... then we know we’re on the right track.” ►

Mailbox

Some fond memories from one of the KB’s oldest fans

I had a wonderful email exchange with Bruno Nuessli this month. He initially wrote to ask where he could find a copy of the Appalachian Barn Orchestra CD, and was sad to hear it’s long out of print, which he suspected. But Bruno is perhaps one of the longest fans of the Kruger Brothers, and was following them before they even formed as a band. Here he describes some of his early encounters with Jens and, later, the kindling of the Kruger Brothers as we know them today:

“The first time I saw Jens Krüger was in the 80s. He was very young then and a member of the Bluegrass Family, who live here in Switzerland. They still play here every year in their hometown [at] a small and very nice concert with many guests from here and from all over the world.

“In the 80s Jens Krüger was a member and I saw them here in my hometown, Winterthur, a few times in a small free Sunday morning matinee. A friend and I went to see them again and again and we talked with them a lot and they were very friendly.

“Jens then got together with his brother, Uwe, and I saw them, for example, at the Zürich Country Festival and other places, possibly Interlaken or Flüela. They got better and better. Then they left for the USA. It’s great to hear that they still are playing their music there. I’m proud to have seen the early days of these great musicians.”

While he may not have the Appalachian Barn Orchestra disc, Bruno has everything else, including some rarities, including an LP from the early 80s released by the Bluegrass Family that includes Jens on banjo, as well as a Phil Carmen LP that includes Uwe on guitar. It’s perhaps likely that he has the most complete collection of the Kruger Brothers’ history on record.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



Zeb and Samantha with the KBs in 2007 at Carolina in the Fall. Photo courtesy Jane Hogan.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

Some fantastic news this month: **Joel Landsberg** and **Sarah Greenwald** were wed in North Wilkesboro on July 17. As someone wrote on facebook, "it couldn't happen to a nicer bass player." All the best to Joel and Sarah. • There's a very nice retrospective feature on fiddler **Jim Shumate** in the July edition of *Bluegrass Unlimited* magazine. The article includes on page 44 a photo of Shumate on stage with Jens, Uwe, Joel and Maynard Holbrook that was taken at a show in 2008. • Listeners in Southern Ontario can tune in for an on-air interview on **93.3 CFMU in Hamilton, Ontario**, on the morning of August 13. The KBs will be featured by Jim Marino on *Freewheelin' Folk* which airs between 10 and 12am. You can also tune in online at cfmu.msumcmaster.ca • Thanks to everyone—and there were quite a few of you—who wrote offering to send copies of *Appalachian Barn Orchestra* to **Bruno Nuessli** in order to complete his collection (see "Fond Memories" in the July newsletter). The Double Time motto is "nice music for nice people" and once again that proves true.

On the Road

The month begins at the Podunk Bluegrass Music Festival in **East Hartford, CT**, which runs August 4 through the 7th. Then, it's off to Canada for the Little Lake Music Festival in **Peterborough, ON**, on the 10th, and an evening at the Pearl Company in **Hamilton, ON**, on the 14th.

Remembering Kenny Baker

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Kenny Baker on July 8th. Baker was an influential fiddler and, with nearly 25 years with Bill Monroe, served more years as a Bluegrass Boy than any other musician.

When Jens first played with Monroe at Bean Blossom in 1982, it was Kenny Baker he stood beside. And, later that summer backstage at



Skip and Charlotte Vetter while on tour with the Kruger Brothers in Switzerland, 2010.

the Grand Ole Opry, it was Baker who taught Jens how to wear a hat. Jens fondly recalls, "In those days they wore the white hats with feathers in front, and [Bill Monroe] had an extra one so he gave me one to wear. I put it on my head, and my hair was sticking out from beneath the hat in the front. [Monroe] turns to Kenny Baker and says, 'Show the boy how to wear a hat!' So Kenny Baker takes it off and sweeps my hair back, puts it back on and says 'We're not looking like John Denver around here!' That was the 17th of July 1982." It was that night that Monroe introduced Jens at the Opry as the first European banjo player to appear on that stage.

Baker was a coal miner, a hog farmer, and had served with the US Navy before becoming a professional musician. His long bowing style, in particular, gave his playing the smooth, clear sound he was famous for. He was inducted to the International Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame in 1999.

Kenny Baker died in Gallatin, TN, at the age of 85. He will be missed.

Editorial

Skip's World

Friend, fan, inspiration. Skip Vetter is one of those people who know that if you sit in the right place long enough, you just never know what—or who—might happen by.

by Glen Herbert

Skip Vetter is a great storyteller, and a favorite story that he tells is how he first met the Kruger Brothers. It's best to hear him tell it, but nevertheless, here goes: He and Charlotte had seen the band live and, for whatever reason, felt that these were people that they simply had to meet. At the time the KBs did the radio ad for Harold's Diner (the radio spot is collected on the first Carolina Scrapbook) and therefore seemed the right place to meet (stalk?) the band.

So, one afternoon in Wilkesboro, off they go. There they ask after Jens, Uwe, or Joel, and Harold says that most days they come by if they're in town and that, you never know, they

could be in soon. Not long after taking a seat and deciding to wait a bit, sure enough in walks Uwe. Seeing an empty seat at their table, Uwe asks, "Is this seat taken?" to which Skip responds, "Actually, we were saving it for you."

Of course, Uwe sat down, and that was the beginning of a friendship that continues to this day. The best part of the story, of course, is that it is absolutely true. And since then, the story just keeps getting better. Skip and Charlotte have traveled with the band to Canada a number of times, to Europe in 2010, and on youtube, you can even catch a glimpse of them together in Wayne Henderson's kitchen. Skip also painted the images on the covers of the Carolina Scrapbook, Volume 2.

Skip is an avid and very skilled photographer and a regular contributor to the Flickr online photo stream where he posts under the name Skipbro. Looking at his photos, you can't help but smile, in part because they seem to form a portrait of his world: insects, birds, friends, his backyard railroad, the Kruger

Brothers, Emma, his beagle, and Charlotte sitting reading a book in the shade of a tree in a friend's garden.

One of the sets in his Flickr photo stream is titled "Lawn Chair Series" and it includes a number of shots taken, literally, from the vantage point of his lawn chair. There are photographers who will climb over barbed wire to get a shot, but I think it's safe to say that Skip isn't one of them. Still, some of the photos he gets could be the envy of those who do. In the set is a bald eagle, a water snake skimming across the surface of the river, a great blue heron having just caught a catfish, a family of ducks. All taken sitting on the bank of a river waiting to see whatever happens by.

Skip might say that he was lucky, but people who know him know better. It's about knowing where to sit, which direction to face, and that you might have to wait a bit. Skip is just one of those people who knows all of that though, when the options are limited, believing becomes an act of will. Skip served in Viet Nam, after all, so it hasn't all been ducks and dragonflies.

And then there's the cancer. In 2008 Skip was diagnosed with a very invasive, very serious cancer. The prognosis was such that living a year was beating the odds. So a year later he held a pig picking at his home in Moore County, North Carolina, and after the party he simply carried on. His hair came back, he got his weight back up, he bought a new RV and he and Charlotte were out on the road going places and seeing things, same as ever.

There were lots of new posts to the Flickr site, too, though on June 24th of this year he captioned a quiet portrait of his dog with the following: "Emma is feeling down because her Daddy (me) has a recurrence of cancer. I only mention it to explain my periodic absence from commenting on Flickr for the next little while. I'll be starting chemo next week."

He did start the chemo. He and Charlotte also bought a pontoon boat and took tours on the lake for Joel and Sarah's wedding guests. And he once again continued posting to his photo stream: birds, trains, a photo of his stars and stripes windsock flying above his RV in celebration of the Fourth of July. He continues to pass along great shots for use in the newsletters and on the KB website. Same as ever. In a sense, it's as if he is once again unfolding the chair, turning it in the right direction, and

sitting down to see what, or who, happens by.

As I write this, Skip is doing well. The rounds of chemo continue, and there's lots of therapy yet to come. His recurrence came as a shock—perhaps everyone knew it could happen, but it still catches your breath when it actually does. Through it all Skip continues to be an inspiration and, without a doubt, a great friend to the Kruger Brothers and everybody else he knows.

And indeed that's why I wanted to write about him here: he's not a great musician and he's never shared the stage with the Krugers, but he's a great guy and a great friend. In the world of the Kruger Brothers, just as in Skip's world, that's more than enough. ►

You can check out Skip Vetter's photography by Googling "skipbro". It will be the first hit that comes up.

Profile

Bobby Martin

Bobby Martin has music, and perhaps particularly Kruger music, in his soul.

by Dan Shearer

Bobby Martin came into this world with a drumstick in each hand and these days carries a set of brushes wherever he goes. "My brushes are my calling card; I leave a pair of them wherever I play," Bobby says with pride.

Bobby also came into the world destined to love and play bluegrass music. "My mama said I was five when I started playing drums; all I remember was that I was eight when I earned my first five dollars playing a snare drum and cymbals with my dad and uncle at the Elks Lodge."

Now living in Union Grove, very near the grounds of the Fiddler's Grove Ole Time Fiddler's and Bluegrass Festival (aka: "Fiddler's Grove") Bobby is a walking "Who's Who" of bluegrass music. Give him a chance and he'll tick off the names of the members of the Bluegrass Alliance since it's beginning and tell you stories about the musicians he's played with throughout the years, many of them having honed their craft nearby in the musically fertile North Carolina mountains and foothills.

Born and raised in a bluegrass family in Salisbury, NC, as a young man Bobby migrated to Wyoming



Bobby Martin with the KBs on stage in Zurich, Switzerland.

where he helped start the band "South Past" which became the house band at the popular "The Log Cabin in Jackson Hole." A fish out of water, Bobby acquired the nickname, "Okie," only because the folks he hung out with in Wyoming associated everyone back East with Oklahoma.

In 1987, after working for a seismographic company out West, Bobby returned to his North Carolina bluegrass roots, played off-and-on with various bands and became an electrical technician working on nuclear power plants, a job he holds to this day. It was at a Fiddler's Grove festival, actually the Kruger Brothers' first, that Bobby remembers meeting Joel. But it was stepping into a tent where the Kruger Brothers were doing a workshop after their first MerleFest appearance "that changed my life. I was simply fascinated with them."

The Kruger Brothers and Bobby soon became close friends, often jamming into the wee hours of the morning on Jen's front porch. However, the first time Bobby played with the Krugers on stage was at the Cook Shack in Union Grove, home to the well-attended Saturday morning jams and the evening concert series. Later, on tour with the band in Douglas, Wyoming, Bobby, who Uwe says "is an incredible traveling companion," witnessed the famous encounter with the three laughing monks, the inspiration for the Kruger Brother's well-known tune.

More recently, Bobby traveled with the band as a guest on their European tour, and to his surprise was invited on stage for the encore at the Zurich Chamber Music Hall. With no drums set up on stage, Bobby improvised, grabbing a plastic cable box and took out the set of brushes he never leaves home without. Reflecting on the tour

Bobby says, "The Krugers are one of the hardest working bands I've known—very giving to all around them."

Bobby is proud to be part Cherokee. He credits that bloodline with "allowing me insight into Jens' imagination when he captured in the Concerto the essence of the settling of these historic Appalachian Mountains." Uwe honors that ancestral thread when he says, "Bobby has that Native American part of his soul, and his drum playing reflects that heritage. It's an original way of looking at timing—a natural flow, not showcasing. As a drummer Bobby is a participant-type; as a person, Bobby looks at humanity with an open heart."

Bobby has a lot to say about the friendship and the bond of brotherhood and love of music he shares with Uwe, Jens, Joel, and Philip and how that relationship has enriched his life, but the expression that tells you most about his appreciation for the influence the Krugers Brothers have had on him, personally and musically is, "The Krugers are the ones who re-lit the flame in a fire that was almost out." ►

Write Us!

Thoughts, concert reviews, reflections, articles—whatever it is, we'd love to hear from you and to include your voice in the KB newsletter. Email glenherbert@sympatico.ca



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

This month marks the 100th anniversary of Bill Monroe's birth, and Jens is featured in the September edition of **Bluegrass Unlimited** magazine. There he remembers what it was like to spend a summer—including a visit to the Opry stage—with the father of bluegrass. • Jens, Joel, and Uwe will be instructing at this year's **Nash Camp** in Nashville, TN, October 21st to the 23rd. • **Coming soon: Kruger Brothers' music camp!** It will be held in Wilkesboro May 11-13th 2012. Watch this space for details. •

On the Road

This month sees a return to the **Oklahoma International Bluegrass Festival** in Guthrie, OK. The festival is the brainchild of Byron Berline, three-time national fiddle champion and current resident of Guthrie. Berline's idea was to bring together bluegrass bands from all over the world, and the Krugers have been attending the festival for a number of years now. A bit of KB trivia: Eight years ago when Bobby Hicks arrived at the festival without a back-up band, Byron suggested the Kruger Brothers. "Why not," thought Bobby, "if Byron recommends them, they must be good." He recalls a sense of awe when he began playing "Estrellita" and Jens—who Bobby says, "continues to amaze me"—played along note for note.

On the Web

Switzerland meets Brazil by way of Appalachia

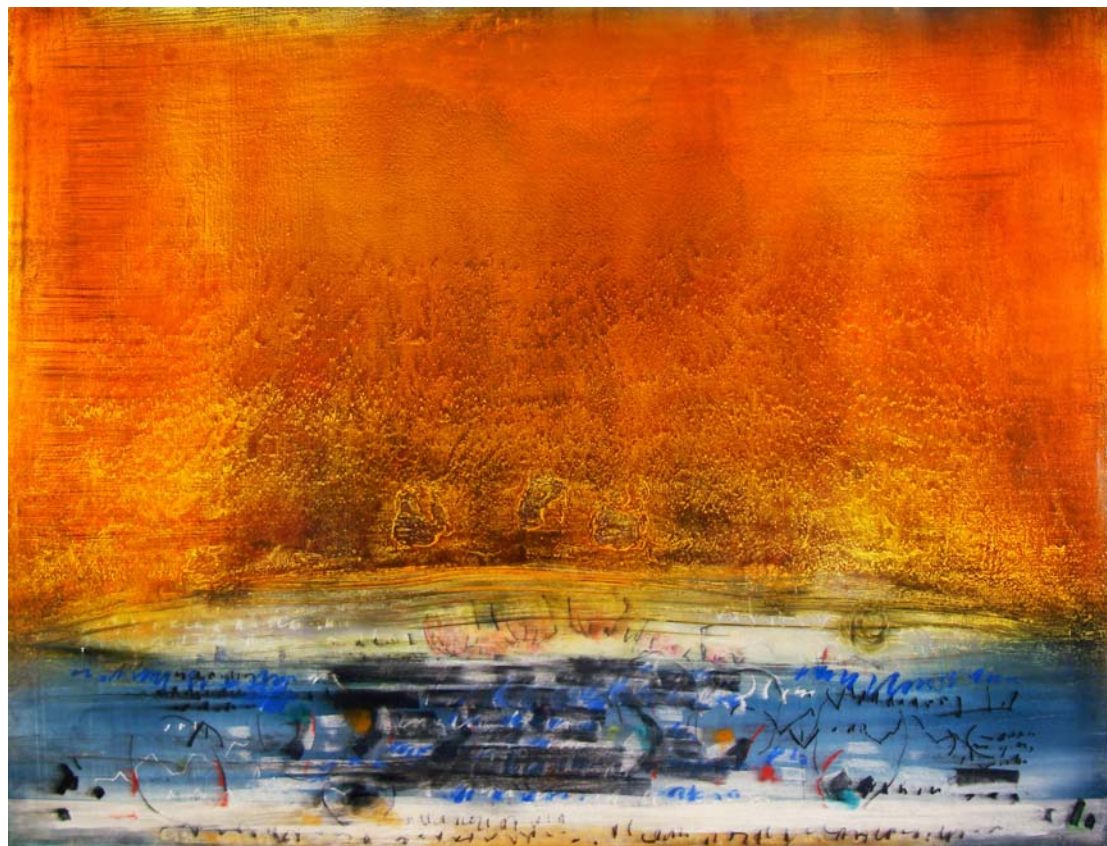
Jens collaborated with Jimmy Gaudreau and guitarist Frank Vignola on "El Doggo" for inclusion on Jimmy Gaudreau's CD, *Pieces and Bits*. You can hear the full track as posted at Gaudreau's website at the following link:

<http://jimmygaudreau.bandcamp.com/track/el-doggo>

or right-click:

<http://jimmygaudreau.bandcamp.com/track/el-doggo>

www.krugerbros.com



Alice Teichert, *Sound Seed*, 54 × 72 inches, acrylic and crayon on canvas

Feature

A new home for "Sound Seed"

Stepping into the main area of the Double Time studio, the first thing that catches your eye isn't the windows, or the equipment, but a painting.

by Glen Herbert

I wanted to include an image of *Sound Seed* (as above) in this issue for a number of reasons, first among them because it's the painting that forms a centerpiece to the Double Time Studio. It was painted by Alice Teichert and hangs in the main studio room where, so far, it has kept watch on the rehearsal and recording of the Appalachian Concerto, the filming of an interview with Swiss national television, and lots of rehearsals and meetings.

But how the painting became the focal point of the studio is a story unto itself, and one which has its

beginnings in 2010 when Jens met Teichert in her Port Hope, Ontario, studio during a short trip to Canada.

"I never will forget the moment when Jennifer brought Jens into my studio," says Teichert. "He was just dancing on cloud nine. He was absorbed by this painting."

It was one of those Kruger moments, when disparate things just seem to fall together. Teichert noted after the fact that, not only did they really connect but that even during that first meeting it felt less like an introduction than "like a reunion."

"They are European, but there is something else I can't put a word on. It is a feeling. When Jens and I met, I could immediately see an underlying understanding. We are aware of both worlds [Europe and North America] and it just totally brings you to other spaces."

It's that straddling of cultural worlds that sets Teichert's work and that of the Kruger Brothers apart. Like them, when growing up she didn't immediately have a

single cultural identity, but rather had a foot in many different identities, one of which was music.

"[Music] is the first language I learned to read ... it is very much a universal language of communication, it just moves us. And I think that's what the Kruger Brothers are very good at doing."

"They're a great example of how you can expand territories, bringing unlikely worlds together and make them akin. Just to know that *Sound Seed* is hanging in the studio of the Kruger Brothers humbles my heart."

The painting was a gift to the Kruger Brothers. The title of the work, of course, is fitting for where it now hangs. It will be there, watching over and perhaps even inspiring the composition, arrangement, and recording of all that great music yet to come. ►

Alice Teichert lives and works in Port Hope, Ontario. Her next show, titled CRESCENDO, opens this October in Widen, Switzerland.

www.aliceteichert.com

Listening In

Brother Duets

Remember Chet and Doc's guitar duets? Jens and Uwe do.

by Glen Herbert

I was recently asked if I could name a recording other than "Moon Over Switzerland" that features both Uwe and Jens on guitar. Certainly, for hard-core Kruger fans, this is a great little trivia question to toss around for a while.

But there is another aspect to this beyond just the geeky counting of songs (there are seventeen if you count both versions of "Once I Had a Sweetheart") and that's the perspective that the guitar duets offer on the artistic interaction between Jens and Uwe. For one, the work is incredibly close, perhaps due in part to the fact that they are brothers. In vocal music, "brother duets"—the Delmores and the Monroes; the Louvins and Jim and Jesse—are examples of that extra level of communication and intuition that only siblings seem to have.

For the Krugers, that level of intuition is in everything they do, but is particularly evident when they are both playing guitar.

In some instances, the playing is so close that it can be hard to tell exactly who is doing what, as on "When the Work's All Done this Fall." Trying to keep track of things there becomes a bit of a parlor game.

In other instances, it's the contrasting guitar voices that adds interest to an arrangement, as on "My Cabin in Caroline" and "Flatt Did It." The styles that Jens and Uwe use in those arrangements recall, often literally, the brilliant duets of Chet Atkins and Doc Watson. Jens is more chordal in his playing, often with a bit of a jazz chord-melody style creeping in (as on "Cowboy's Blues"). He uses a thumbpick and plays with a finger style that is informed by his work on the banjo.

Uwe most often comes at the guitar from a flatpicking perspective, adding all those deep bass notes and gorgeous runs. On faster songs it's like a top spinning off of the melody; on slower ballads, it's a wisp of smoke rising from a candle flame.

www.krugerbros.com

It's a great combination, and chances are there is more of it out there than you might think. Below are a few of the tracks that have been released over the years:

"Flatt Did It"

"On My Way to Canaan's Land"

(*Behind the Barn*, vol. 2)

Both of these tracks are literal tributes to Chet and Doc, as both appeared on their *Reflections* album. Jens brilliantly captures Chet's style, Uwe brilliantly captures Doc's, though they also mirror the spirit and the fun that Chet and Doc clearly had whenever they played together.

"My Cabin in Caroline" (Up 18 North)

Again, a style that seems influenced, if only subliminally so, by Chet and Doc. The solo alone is a lesson in how two very different guitar styles can work so well together.

"Once I Had Sweetheart" (Forever and a Day)

They've recorded this twice, first on the *Scrapbook* collection. At this recording the song has a few more miles on it, and it shows. ►

Profile

Christa Kruger

Over the years Christa has been a wife, mother, and a member of the band.

by Dan Shearer

As a child in Zurich, Christa Diggelmann dreamed of becoming a professional ballerina, a dream which led her at a young age to choose the dancing school educational track in Switzerland where she trained for ten years, performing in productions in several European countries.

One day at a fair being held on the campus where sixteen-year old Christa was living, she met a young man named Jens Kruger who was performing, along with his brother Uwe, in a band called The Undertaker Skiffle Company. Six months later, Christa and Jens' paths crossed again at the Zurich train station, an experience she remembers fondly, in part due to the cowboy outfit Jens, who was on his way to perform, was wearing—chaps, spurs, and his favorite cowboy hat, the works—but

mostly because this was where, as Christa puts it, they "connected."

Some time passed before Jens decided to move from his home in eastern Switzerland to Zurich (where Christa was living) and become a street musician while Christa continued her ballet training. Unfortunately, an injury caused Christa at age nineteen to give up her dream of becoming a professional dancer. But good timing prevailed, because not long afterwards, her musical career was launched when Jens (who was playing with the Bluegrass Family after he and Uwe left the Rocky Road and decided to go their separate ways) gave Christa a ticket to pick up an item stored at the train station. Much to Christa's surprise she found a guitar waiting for her at the station. She immediately set to the task of learning chords and soon found herself playing at home with Jens as their personal and musical relationship developed.

But Christa's big musical break didn't involve the guitar. A short time after a group called The Bluegrass Friends played for Jens and Christa's wedding, the band lost their bass player and invited Christa to learn the bass and join them. Join them she did, taking advantage of the natural rhythmic transition from guitar to bass, and played in the band for five years.

Meanwhile Jens and Uwe had reunited, not yet as a band, but simply as brothers playing together, with Christa joining them on bass, adding more songs to their "repertoire" as a family while each continued to perform professionally with their own band(s); Jens was still with the Bluegrass Family, Christa with the Bluegrass Friends, and Uwe with various country bands.

Then one day Christa, Uwe, and Jens were invited to play at Reussfähr, a restaurant in Lucerne where Jens had been performing. That night, the Appalachian Barn Orchestra was born, at least in spirit—the name was chosen to reflect the music they were playing, much like that of barn dances in America. As opportunities for the band to perform increased, including one where they were billed with Alison Krauss, Christa continued playing for both the "Orchestra" and Bluegrass Friends until just before Jens and Christa's first child, Mirjam, was born.



Uwe, Christa and Jens circa the Appalachian Barn Orchestra.

Christa left the Bluegrass Friends, took a week off to give birth to Mirjam, then resumed playing with the "Orchestra."

The Appalachian Barn Orchestra enjoyed eight successful years (through the birth of Jens' and Christa's second child, Anja), playing many events and appearing on radio and TV. They also had a monthly national radio show called "The Kruger Brothers" (has a nice ring to it, doesn't it?).

As the band continued to develop, Jens and Uwe left their other bands to concentrate on the Appalachian Barn Orchestra. But with the demands of raising two kids, Christa couldn't "keep up with all of the musical styles that Jens and Uwe wanted to play," ones that audiences demanded, so Christa decided it was time to leave the band.

But Christa wasn't through. A couple of years later she joined Holiday Bluegrass Jam (later renamed Morning Dew) where she played bass and sang (for the first time in a band), all the while teaching dance classes, wellness exercise, learning to belly dance, and earning a diploma as a yoga instructor. Christa stayed with Mountain Dew until 2003 when she, Jens, and the girls moved to America.

Fast forward to a rainy afternoon at the 2009 Carolina In the Fall Festival in North Wilkesboro when the Appalachian Barn Orchestra musicians reunited, performing a set on stage in front of a small gathering of wet but loyal fans. I for one hope it wasn't the last time. ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The Kruger Brothers were interviewed by Bob Edwards of the **Bob Edwards Show** on Sirius/XM Radio. Audio files of the interview have been posted to the 'Press' page of the KB website. • Dates have been confirmed for the **2012 Silver Dollar City BBQ and Bluegrass** festival in Branson, MO. The KBs will be at the festival May 16, 17, and 18. • Visit the KB homepage to check out a recently produced video of Jens playing Bach's *Cello Suite* no. 1. •

On the Road

The month begins at the Porter Center for Performing Arts at Brevard College in Brevard NC for a presentation of the Appalachian Concerto on the 6th. On the 8th the KBs appear in concert with Doc Watson at the Farthing Auditorium in Boone, NC. Then they hit the road for three dates in a row: Stuart's Opera House in Nelsonville, OH, on the 14th; the Pittsburgh Arts Council in Pittsburgh, PA, 15th; and the Cultural Center Theater in Charleston, WV, on the 16th, appearing as part of the Mountain Stage concert series.

Remembering Dr. T. R. Bryan, Jr.



It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Dr. Thomas Rhudy "T. R." Bryan, Jr., on September 7. Dr.

Bryan was a prominent physician in North Wilkesboro and a highly respected and much loved member of the Wilkesboro community. Specializing in obstetrics and pediatrics, he was proud to have delivered more than 9,000 babies in his long and distinguished career. He was also a great fan, supporter, and close friend to the Kruger Brothers in a relationship that began when they first arrived



Jens teaching a private workshop in Pennsylvania in 2009. Joel, Jens, and Uwe have taught throughout their professional careers as musicians, from private lessons to large classes at music camps around the country.

in the Wilkesboro community. "I am grateful for the privilege to have known him," says Uwe, "and for the opportunity to say goodbye in peace." ►

Paying tribute to the Grandfather of Bluegrass, Wade Mainer

Wade Mainer, known popularly as the Grandfather of Bluegrass, died on September 12 at his home in Flint, Michigan, at the age of 104. Mainer was born in western North Carolina and gained fame in the '20s and '30s with his band, the Sons of the Mountaineers. He was perhaps the first to take the traditional music of North Carolina to the White House, where he played at the request of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941. His playing inspired Earl Scruggs, Bill Monroe, Don Reno, Doc Watson, Ralph Stanley, and indeed many others. Mainer also introduced and popularized many songs that have since become standards within the bluegrass repertoire, including "Blue Ridge Mountain Blues" which the Kruger Brothers featured on

Travel the Gravel. His life spanned the entire development of what we now know as bluegrass music, and he was active musically well into his 10th decade. ►

The Kruger Brothers' Music Academy to launch May 2012

You asked for it, and now the good idea is finally going to become a reality—the first Kruger Brothers Music Academy is scheduled for the weekend of May 11th, 2012.



Imagine a weekend in the Double Time Studio, playing music, talking, jamming, listening to and learning with three masters of their

instruments. Well, that's exactly what the Kruger Brothers' Music Academy intends to be.

"Our aim for the academy," says Jens, "is to have a place where people can come and really talk about music. Whether that's over lunch, in the classroom, during a jam ... the music comes first."

It's the kind of music instruction that Jens, Uwe, and Joel themselves valued most.

"People learn music because something grabs them, but it can be hard to find what it is," says Jens. "It's more than just what picks you use or where you put your fingers ... for me as a child what was amazing was not *how* music works, but *why*."

Jens, Uwe and Joel have long been favorites of various workshops and music camps, including many of the best-known camps in the country.

All the academy workshops, classes, performances and meals will take place on the property of Double Time Studios. Registration is first-come, first-served, and through the academy page of the KB website or by calling the Double Time office at 336-667-2800. ►

Profile

Bob Kogut

Being a violin maker alone is interesting. To be one that came not only to building, but even playing long after most violinists have long outgrown Suzuki classes, puts Bob Kogut in a class of his own.

by Dan Shearer

"One day, I want to visit all of my violins, all one hundred and thirty eight of them. I want to see if the owner is happy, I want to play the instrument, hear it's unique voice, see if it's tone has matured, if it's character has changed, adjust it if necessary, and hear and record the owner playing. "That," says Bob Kogut, violin-maker and musician, "is my dream."

Born and raised in Chester, PA, Bob has led a serendipitous life. Drafted in 1968, Bob's military "career" was cut short when a motorcycle accident left him seriously injured and in the hospital for months. While in recovery, Bob developed a tremor, but a creative neurologist told Bob's dad to get Bob a guitar, which he did, and although he had never played an instrument, soon Bob was picking and strumming. The doctor's prescription worked – the tremor disappeared, and Bob's musical journey was launched.

A second pivotal event in Bob's life occurred when his brother took him to a bluegrass festival in Maryland where none other than Bill Monroe was playing. Bob was "hypnotized" when he heard Kenny Baker, Monroe's fiddler, play "Jerusalem Ridge" and fell in love with the music. But it was watching two jamming fiddlers having a musical conversation with their instruments that captivated Bob and kindled what up to now had been dormant. He heard a voice in his head exclaim, "I've got to be a fiddler." So he bought a cheap fiddle and taught himself (with a little help from some experienced fiddlers). Bob soon outgrew the instrument, as he did with a succession of violins, and unable to satisfy his drive to find

the perfect instrument, it dawned on Bob that he could make one himself – from scratch. So he did, and "it sounded okay."

But not to violin expert Bob Bragg who "confiscated" Bob's fiddle and told him, "You'll never make another fiddle if you keep this one." It took three more "inferior" hand-made fiddles, each confiscated in turn by Bob Bragg until he let Kogut keep one, the fiddle having met Bragg's standard.

In 1982, Bob moved to Florida, where he played with various country, swing, and bluegrass bands, all the while buying and repairing broken fiddles, until one day the widow of a violin-maker whose shop Bob liked to visit, gave Bob her husband's hand tools – tools which Bob uses to this day.

Years later, while playing MerleFest, Bob became enchanted with the culture of the North Carolina mountains, "the heart of violin-making," and moved with his wife Roberta to Lenoir, NC where

he set up his home instrument shop and took on the challenge of "making fiddles that fiddlers like." By night and on weekends (when he's not performing) Bob works in his shop; by day he practices his training as a physical therapist, the profession having been "serendipitously" inspired by his hospital stay decades earlier. Among the many violins that Bob has made for fiddlers over the years, here are a few names you might recognize: Nikki Sanders, Mike Marshall, Darrell Anger, Josh Goforth and many others.

At another MerleFest Bob's "jaw dropped" when he heard the Kruger Brothers for the first time – playing their unique European version of "Dueling Banjos." Then Bob got an idea - to organize a local fiddlers' convention in nearby Happy Valley and see if the Kruger Brothers would play. So he asked them, and in addition to agreeing they volunteered Philip to provide the sound. That was in 2004, and the Kruger Brothers have not only played the Historic Happy Valley Ole Time Fiddlers' Convention ever since, but according to Bob, "have

been the heart and soul of the festival."

It was at the 2006 MusicFest 'N Sugar Grove when Jens first invited Bob to play with the Kruger Brothers, an experienced which evolved into Bob, Jens, Joel, and Uwe playing at contra dances throughout the region. Then one day, Jens, who knows a thing or two about fiddle-making himself, after playing Bob's fiddle, complimented Bob on the quality of the instrument and asked Bob to make him one. Which he did and named the fiddle "Christa" (Bob gives all his fiddles a woman's name ending in "a"). Jens told Bob, "I love it and play it everyday."

Jens says, "Every time I talk to Bob about instrument-making I learn a lot. He is a great craftsman, but foremost he loves good sound. That's why each of his violins is a manifestation of passion, intuition, and craftsmanship. Over the past few years, Bob and his family have become dear friends of ours. His wit and humor make every music event with Bob an extraordinary experience." ►

More information on Bob Kogut, his music and his violins can be found at <http://webpages.charter.net/koguts/>



Violin #77, "Carala"

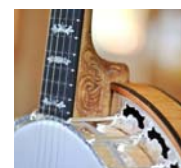
First Person Singular

What makes a good banjo player?

Jens: "What makes a good banjo player is the same as what makes a good musician. It really doesn't make any difference. So, it would be quite a task to [give an] answer. But [ultimately] it's a question of honesty, I think. For me personally, I feel that if I'm very honest with what I play, [with] what I feel I need to play, then I feel like I'm doing a good job. ... You could easily 'wow' people with something that they don't understand. It can be also like false wisdom, where it really doesn't matter because people are going to see in it whatever they really want to see. And I can just give them something that they can't follow. But I'm not so fond of that. You know, it's like a Chinese circus. You go to watch it and you're fascinated, but when are you ever going to go back? When I listen to Doc Watson, or I listen to Beethoven sonatas, there is something in the music that wants me to go back and to listen to it again and again and again. Because it's not about 'wowing' me, necessarily. It's about opening a door and showing me a world that I didn't have access to as easily without the music." ►

On the Web

The new Kruger Brothers' ringtone!



Now, every time someone calls you on your cell phone, you can be alerted by Jens, Joel, and Uwe playing the

fastest banjo instrumental they've ever recorded. How fun is that?! The "Waterfall" ringtone, created from the piece that appears on *Up 18 North*, is available through the Apple iPhone ringtone shop. To find it, search on "Kruger" and "Waterfall" and look for the banjo icon. ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

Last month we said goodbye to two great friends: **Kurt Stadlin** and **Clint Howard**. Both appeared on the *Carolina Scrapbook* collections, though it was their warmth and friendship that made them so important in the lives of the Kruger Brothers. • Jens was interviewed by **Tony Trischka**, and students of Trischka's School of Banjo can view the interview at the top of the special guests' page. • Dates have been added to the schedule for a short **European tour** of the Appalachian Concerto this December. (See p. 2) ►

On the Road

The KBs are at the Fletcher Opera House in **Raleigh, NC**, on the 3rd; the Tryon Fine Arts Center in **Tryon, NC**, on the 4th; and the Madison County Arts Center in **Madison, NC**, on the 5th. On the 18th they head north to play William and Mary College in **Williamsburg, VA**.

Remembering Kurt Stadlin

We were shocked to hear of the passing of Kurt Stadlin in mid-October. Kurt was the first champion of Kruger music in the US. As Uwe has said, "he was the man who sent the tape to MerleFest in 1995 that got us accepted to play in America in 1997, so he is responsible for us being here."

That Stadlin was here himself is another, and in some ways a very



Jens, Doc Watson, Joel, Charles Welch, and Uwe rehearse prior to a performance in support of AppState's Sustainable Development Outreach program on October 8 in Boone, NC. See "Watching" pg. 2.

similar, story. While teaching at the University of Switzerland one of his students loaned him a tape of Doc Watson and told him about MerleFest. He was hooked, and began making plans to attend the festival, at which point he was put in touch with Brenda Shepherd who invited him to come and stay with her family on the Shepherd farm.

Through the Shepherds he was introduced to the culture and the people of Wilkes County, NC. Between that and the music festival, he had a sneaking suspicion that this was a place where the Kruger Brothers—a band he knew from his home in Switzerland—would fit right in. Not one to let a good idea get away, he started to work on finding a way to get them to MerleFest, sending tapes and CDs and promotional packages to the booking committee, and generally making a pest of himself.

Of course, the work paid off. "They got the invitation by fax two weeks before MerleFest 1997," he later recalled.

"I arranged a meeting with Doc Watson. At this time, these boys had been playing his music for 25 years. For them and for me, to meet Doc at his house was like a dream come true."

He wasn't the only one who felt that way. As Uwe has said, coming

to Wilkes county, even that first time, "it felt like I was finally touching ground."

Uwe's introduction to Wilkes County was much like the one that Stadlin had received those few years earlier. He, Joel, Jens, and Philip stayed at the Shepherd farm, were introduced to the culture and the people of the area, and played MerleFest to enraptured audiences. Throughout, they seemed to fit right in just as Stadlin had thought they might.

Dividing his time between his home in Switzerland and the farm he and Maria refurbished in Moravian Falls, NC, Stadlin remained a great supporter, friend, and fan of the Kruger Brothers. (He even took the photo that appears on the cover of *Travel the Gravel*.)

As a sign of appreciation for all he had done for the Kruger Brothers, Jens gave him a banjo. Stadlin recalled "I took it home and handed it to Maria. She picked it up and after a little while started playing it." She was a quick study and they formed a band, The Coffee Pickers, recorded three CDs, and are featured on "Peach Picking Time Down in Georgia" on the KBs *Carolina Scrapbook*, Vol. 2. On all the recordings, Kurt and Maria's enduring charm is evident in every note.

Kurt Stadlin will be deeply missed. ►

Honoring musician, inspiration and friend Clint Howard

It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Clint Howard on October 16 at his home in Mountain City, TN. There are perhaps many people that are regarded as inspirations, though few that can live up to that recognition in the way that Clint Howard did. He played Carnegie Hall, Newport Folk Festival, toured Europe with Doc Watson, and appeared on Pete Seeger's television show "Rainbow Quest."

Even so, Howard wasn't one to rest on his laurels, or even to recognize them. Yes, he'd played some of the world's great venues, yet he brought the same spirit and enthusiasm to the people he visited and sang for at seniors' centers and schools, or the kids he drove in his school bus. He seemed to have no greater goal than drawing a smile, a laugh, or merely lightening hearts in any way he could.

And while there are many voices on the two Kruger Brothers' *Carolina Scrapbook* collections, Howard's is for many one of the most memorable. There he tells stories of his time performing with his dear friend and musical partner Doc Watson, singing one of his signature tunes, "Light in the

Window,” and, of course, the moonshine joke.

Some years ago, the Kruger Brothers wrote that “Clint Howard has been known to us as one of the most respected and influential personalities in American musical history. His groundbreaking recordings of classic American folk repertoire have been cornerstones for countless musicians and audiences throughout the world. It is our humble belief that Clint Howard deserves to be recognized as one of the nation’s greatest treasures.”

Indeed he does. We will miss Clint Howard, though, given the person he was, it’s safe to say that the people who will miss him the most are those of his beloved Johnson County, TN, where he served his community through music, leadership, and unflagging respect and friendship. ►

European Dates added to schedule

A short European tour of the Appalachian Concerto has been added to the schedule for December of this year. The KBs will tour with the UNI Quartet, an ensemble consisting of members of the National Theatre Opera of Prague. The tour will make a stop in Prague, CZ, and perform three dates in Switzerland in Bern, Zurich, and Altdorf.

If you don’t plan on being in Europe in the new year, dates will be added to the schedule for performances of the Appalachian Concerto. These in addition to events in Ogden, UT, on January 27 and 28, and Bradenton, FL, on March 4.

KBs collaborate with Imagine Ballet Theater, Weber State Chamber Orchestra



the KBs will perform in collaboration with Imagine Ballet Theater under the direction of Raymond Von Mason and Chamber Orchestra Ogden & Weber State

Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Michael Palumbo. Selections of *Music from the Spring* have been choreographed for ballet. Unique, new, and not to be missed, this is the first time the Kruger Brothers have added ballet to their symphonic repertoire.

The event will also be unique in that, in addition to the selections from *Music from the Spring*, the evening will feature the *Appalachian Concerto*, though scored for a full symphonic string section.

They follow that event with one on the 28th that will present other aspects of the KBs repertoire. ►

In the Theater

Joe Hill and Si Kahn’s Joe Hill’s Last Will

by Glen Herbert

Joan Baez’s performance of “Joe Hill” at Woodstock in 1969 brought that song to a wider audience, though then as now most people had little idea who Joe Hill was or why Joan might be dreaming that he was “alive as you and me.”

Nevertheless, while the song only touches on it, Hill’s is quite a story. He was born Joel Emmanuel Hägglund in Sweden in 1897, immigrating to the US in 1902 when he was 23. Here he anglicized his name and became a champion of immigrant and labor rights through music. His songs inspired workers throughout North America to unionize and strike in order to improve their treatment and their working conditions. One of his best known songs is “There is Power in a Union.”

Of Joe Hill’s story, though, the good part ends right about there. The rest is, well, not so good. Unrelated to his work as an organizer, he was found guilty of murder in what was, by any measure, a miscarriage of justice. An undaunted jury sentenced him for murder in the first degree and he was later executed by firing squad. His conviction quickly gained notoriety for all the inconsistencies of his trial, his lack of a motive, and Hill’s unaccountable bullet wound that was the prosecution’s only physical evidence connecting Hill to the crime. While the wound was never adequately accounted for, it was evidence enough in what was still very much the wild west.

As I say, it’s quite a story and one that Si Kahn and Grammy-nominated folksinger John McCutcheon recount in their new musical, *Joe Hill’s Last Will*. Hill’s voice is brought to life in this one-man show through Hill’s songs and letters as well as newspaper accounts from the time of the trial and oral histories.

The text of Kahn’s play begins on the last night of Joe Hill’s life. Convicted of murder and awaiting execution in a Utah prison, Hill attempts to explain his life to a young reporter sent to get his last words.

Joe Hill’s Last Will opened on October 7 in performance by John McCutcheon at the Main Stage West in Sebastopol, CA. ►

Listening In

Watching Doc Watson’s sound check

by Dan Shearer

Every year Doc Watson does a benefit performance for the Sustainable Development Outreach Program of Appalachian State University, just up the road from Doc’s home in Deep Gap, NC. This year he invited the Kruger Brothers to join him, and it was a privilege for my wife Kathryn, our friend Dulcie, and I to attend Doc’s sound check.

Well, it started off as a sound check but soon evolved into something more like a rehearsal which included the Krugers and Doc’s long time musical companion, Charles Welch. But for us it was a performance, and if I had to choose between the sound check and the actual event ... I don’t know. There was the legendary but playful Doc Watson having fun, cracking jokes, playing and singing some of his favorite songs including “Shady Grove,” which Doc said is his wife, Rosa Lee’s, favorite.

At one point Doc announced that he planned to start his set for the concert with a solo medley and begin with one of his favorites, “(Until) The Twelfth of Never” recorded by Johnny Mathis. When the self-confessed eighty-eight year old musician lost track of the lyrics during the rehearsal he announced, “I do this in sound checks, but when I get in front of a live audience, I’ll be fine.” And sure

enough, a couple of hours later in front of a thousand fans, he nailed it. ►

Looking Back

The Unbroken Circle

Clint Howard was the very embodiment of the music he played and the part of the world he came from. He was also a connection to many important figures within the music of Appalachia, including Roscoe Holcomb, Tom Ashley, Gaither Carlton, Clarence Ashley, Fred Price, and Doc Watson. In the first photo below he is seen in his 20s—wearing suspenders, turned up pant cuffs and loafers—playing with Clarence Ashley, banjo, and Fred Price, fiddle:



Below he is at a house party standing at right, next to Doc Watson. Also present are Fred Price, Tom Ashley, Jack Johnson, and Tommy Moore with the scrub board:



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The Kruger Brother original "The Lights in Our Village" is included on the Wilkes County Hunger and Health Coalition's compilation **Christmas in the Mountains Vol. 5**. The CD is being sold locally in the Wilkes County area in order to advance the coalition's mission to end hunger in the High Country of North Carolina. The CD is the latest in the annual community project; local performers and project managers donate their time and talents, and more than 70 retail locations offer counter space to the sell the CDs. ● It's official! The Kruger Brothers are on the lineup for **Merlefest 2012**, to be held on the campus of Wilkes Community College April 26-29. For its 25th anniversary, the lineup has been chosen to reflect the diversity and quality of performers that have become the hallmark of the festival. ● The Kruger Brothers will be featured performers at the **Best of Our State 2012** on January 6. The annual gala is hosted by *Our State* magazine to celebrate the people and music that make North Carolina so unique. ● "This is a great performance!" says Donald Nitchie, editor of the **Banjo Newsletter**, of Jen's video of Bach's prelude in G. You can see the video at the KB home page. Jens' DVD *Banjo Method for Beginners* was also featured on the cover of the November issue of *BN*. The image illustrated Ian Perry's feature article, "Learning to Play Banjo in the New Millennium." ►

On the Road

The band hops the pond this month to play four dates in Europe. The mini-tour will present the Appalachian Concerto in Europe for the first time, performed with the UNI Quartet, members of the National Theatre Opera, Prague. They begin in **Prague, CZ**, on the 10th, and then head off to three dates in Switzerland: **Zurich** on the 14th, **Bern** on the 16th, and a return to the beautiful Tellspielhaus in **Altdorf** on the 17th.



The Kruger Brothers performance at Mountain Stage will be broadcast on a range of NPR outlets. To check local stations and times visit the Mountain Stage website at <http://www.mountainstage.org/mtnstageaffiliates.aspx>.

Photo courtesy Brian Blausler/Mountain Stage

Profile

Lody van Vlodrop: friend by design

by Dan Shearer

You remember that boy at the back of the classroom—you know, the one who spent all of his time sketching and drawing instead of listening to the teacher? Well, Lody van Vlodrop was that boy. Born and raised in Holland in the 1950s and later moving to Germany, Lody's preoccupation with sketching prompted his transfer from regular school to art school (for which Lody says his regular school principal was grateful) where at twenty-two Lody earned a degree in graphic design. But many years passed before he worked professionally as an artist, because this other fascination—music—took over, first classical music as a child, then the Beatles, and finally country music when sixteen-year-old Lody first heard a Flatt & Scruggs album, eight years before Jens and Uwe discovered these American country and bluegrass pioneers.

Compelled by the thought, "I have to have a banjo," Lody, like

Jens would later, started with a four-string model, but unlike Jens who played tenor banjo for a longer period, Lody immediately switched to five-string (actually changing only the neck).

Next, like so many other beginners, then and now, he bought Pete Seeger's and Earl Scruggs' banjo books and started playing every chance he could, though drawing and sketching was competing for his time.

Curiously, while Lody had not met or even heard of Jens and Uwe Kruger, here we have another Western European musician who would soon be among the first to bring American country and bluegrass banjo to his homeland.

In the early 70's Lody, still living in Holland, started playing with various old-time and bluegrass bands. One of the bands needed a fiddler, so Lody bought a violin and in one month found himself on stage with the instrument. For the next two decades Lody played throughout Europe. Being one of the few musicians who played banjo and fiddle, he served as a model for young, aspiring European country and bluegrass musicians.

Shortly after Lody moved to Germany with his bride Kerstin (guitar and bass), he found himself playing some of the same clubs where Jens played, although Lody had still not met him. That changes in 1987 at a music festival in Berne where Jens, at the time a member of the Bluegrass Family, was playing.

"I saw Lody playing in a band in Stetten, the little village where I was living, and invited him and his band, Hard Times, to play at the festival," says Jens. Both Lody and Jens characterize that meeting as one involving an instant sense of kinship. "Meeting Jens was a turning point for me, just as I think Jens leaving the Bluegrass Family at about the same time and forming the Appalachian Barn Orchestra with Uwe and Christa was a turning point for him," says Lody.

The friendship between Lody and Kerstin, and Jens and Christa quickly developed both personally and musically. Jens recalls he and Lody playing through the night in the heating room of that castle gardener's house Jens often describes at concerts, and of how the Krugers spent their last four nights with Lody and Kerstin



Lody van Vlodrop has designed all the Kruger Brothers album covers since *Up 18 North*. On screen is the artwork for *Between the Notes*.

before moving to America. The relationship prospers to this day, reinforced by annual visits by the van Vlodrops to the Kruger home in North Carolina.

Then, in 1989, twenty years after having finished art school but never having worked as a professional artist, Lody decided it was time to get a day job, and he joined a graphic arts company. The next year he and Mac (his new computer) started their own freelance graphic arts business.

You might say that the first artistic contribution Lody made to the Krugers was a card he drew for Mirjam, Jens' and Christa's firstborn, on the day of her birth (and the day Lody turned forty)—a card that still serves up fond memories for Lody. But the first professional work Lody did for the Krugers was the design, layout, and artwork for the *Behind the Barn* volumes 1 and 2. Later, after doing the layout for *Up 18 North* and the artwork for *Choices*, Lody was visiting Jens and Christa in their first home in Wilkesboro when the *Carolina Scrap Book Volume Two* was in production. For the album cover Lody collaborated with Skip Vetter (see *KB Newsletter* August 2011) who was also visiting and Tut Taylor, who lived close-by. Lody sketched the cardinal, Skip painted it, and Tut, a former sign-painter, did the fonts. (If you look very closely at the album cover you will discover the tiny handwritten "Tut" and "s.v." by their respective work.)

Since then, Lody has done all of the graphic design and artwork for

the Kruger Brothers' CDs, including the vertical umlaut in the "U" in the Kruger Brothers logo, while enjoying a successful graphic arts career in Germany. And he still plays music—mostly fiddle, occasionally with a bluegrass band in Holland but more often with another band in Germany. Music and graphic art bring him the best of both worlds.

Jens says that "Lody and I share a broad mutual knowledge about music and enjoy easy communication. It was amazing to meet someone as crazy as me about music and the banjo, and it has been fortunate in the span of your life to have these very special friends. Lody is a very good banjo player and knows the details about the instrument, but what I really appreciate about him is his wit and quirky, un-offensive, sarcastic sense of humor." Having had the privilege of spending some time with Lody, I agree. ►

Behind the Notes

The Kruger Brothers and Christina Rosetti

by Glen Herbert

I had an email asking after details of the song "When I'm Dead My Dearest" and, actually, it's a great question. That song is unique to the Kruger Brothers in many more ways than one.

The words, as noted in the liner notes, are by English poet Christina Rosetti who was born in 1830. Her writing was unique for her time.

She wrote on a vast swath of topics, often working with folk tales, hymns, or other forms of poetry, using them to create poems that were, in all senses, uniquely her own.

Perhaps because of her interest in hymns, quite a lot of her work is well suited to music, and indeed her most famous works today are two poems that, when set to music, became very popular and remain so. Because they relate to winter, and Christmas in particular, it is at this time of year that we hear more of Christina Rosetti's words than most of us are perhaps aware. "In the Bleak Midwinter" and "Love Came Down at Christmas" are by far her best known works. (It's ironic, and perhaps not a little bit tragic, that Rosetti is most famous for two songs she herself never heard; both were set to music long after her death.)

The poem Uwe chose to work with was written 1862, when Rosetti was still just 32, and titled simply "Song." The first line of the poem gives the song its title.

The poem is classic Rosetti. She didn't shy from dark topics, and shared the romantic poet's (and the Stanley Brothers') fascination with death. While other poets of her time were writing in dense metaphor, Rosetti, as here, wrote in bare, brutally honest statements. To our ear, it is strikingly modern, and is one of the reasons that her work is still read, and is still inspiring people well over 100 years after her death. ►

Listening In

Jens revisits Bach's prelude in G

by Glen Herbert

Roughly between 1717 and 1723 Johann Sebastian Bach wrote six suites for unaccompanied cello, and the piece that Jens plays in concert and which is also featured in a video on the Kruger Brothers' home page is the prelude to the first of the six, the prelude in G.

While in Bach's time the cello suites were unknown, they came into prominence in the 1900s principally due the influence of one man, Pablo Casals, in what is one of the great stories of the music world: Casals found a copy of the suites in a thrift shop when just 13 and began studying them. He later

played them in concert, though the suites didn't become generally known until he recorded them many years later. Worth the wait, the recordings Casals made of the suites between 1936 and 1939 are among the best-known and best-loved classical recordings in the world.

Part of the appeal of the suites are the mysteries which surround them. While we have a general sense of when they were composed, it is not known in which order they were composed or why Bach decided to write for solo cello, an instrument that was not considered to be a solo instrument at the time. This is further complicated by the fact that Bach may not have been writing for the type of cello we know today, but for a violincello da spalla, an instrument played like a violin, held up under the chin.

Because there are no surviving manuscripts of the suites in Bach's hand, there also aren't any of the performance notes that he included with the other works. The player is left to interpret what the piece is truly meant to say. Should it be muscular, bringing out the mechanics of the piece, or more contemplative, with pauses to divide and contrast the various phrases? If it's a dance—it's clear from the section titles that Bach was thinking of specific folk dances when composing the suites—then exactly what kind of dance is this prelude intended to be?

The prelude is one of the pieces that demonstrates why Bach is so important—he not only composed a repertoire, but also created pieces that have inspired generations of musicians to adapt his music to their own purposes. Cellist Mischa Maisky treats the prelude like a lullaby. In contrast, in a youtube video titled "The Silence Before Bach," a subway car is filled with cellists all playing the piece with the same unceasing forward momentum as the train they are riding on. And Jens' interpretation? Certainly it bears as much of his fingerprint as it does Bach's. ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The KBs are back from a series of shows in **Europe**, including stops in Prague and Switzerland. All shows featured a presentation of the Appalachian Concerto with the UNI quartette from Prague. • The KBs were featured in the December 2 broadcast of **Live From Mountain Stage on NPR**. Their half-hour set has now been archived online, so if you missed the broadcast, you can find the show at the Mountain Stage archive page. • **Barb Heller**, a DJ with Folk Alley and NCPR chose *Christmas Magic* as one of her top picks of the year, saying "It's my new favorite ... a beautiful collection of songs for winter and Christmas." ►

In this Issue

If you're a regular newsletter reader you may have noticed that almost every musician we've profiled last year mentioned it, so in this issue **we begin a two-part profile of the Cook Shack**, a little roadside restaurant in Union Grove, NC.

On the Road

The KBs begin the new year as feature performers at The Best of Our State, an even hosted by *Our State* magazine celebrating some of the people and music that make North Carolina so unique. The event takes place in **Asheville, NC**, on the 6th. On the 24th they are at Cuyamaca College in **El Cajon, CA**, for an evening of music presented by Deering Banjo. The month ends with two performances at Weber State University in **Ogden, UT**. On the evening of the 27th, the KBs are featured in collaboration with Imagine Ballet Theater, the Chamber Orchestra, Ogden and the Weber State Chamber Orchestra. Selections of *Music from the Spring* have been choreographed for ballet. On the 28th, "An evening with the Kruger Brothers" presents other aspects of the KB's repertoire.



Pal and Myles Ireland at the Cook Shack, holding a poster from an event in France. Each spring about 20 visitors from France descend upon the Cook Shack to play, visit, and reconnect with friends.

Profile

Cook Shack, part 1: Pal and Myles Ireland

They built it, and they came, or ... maybe they came, and then they built it. Whichever it was, if you want to experience social music, just the way it has been happening in Appalachia for generations, head to the Cook Shack. (And they have great, burgers, too.)

by Dan Shearer

Myles and Pal Ireland, both born into musical families, grew up in Union Grove, NC, about a block from one another. While they sang together at school, "He didn't know I was a girl until ninth grade when I let him know by the clothes I picked to wear one day," Pal says with a twinkle in her eye. Neither one of them looked back, became singing childhood sweethearts, got married in September 1956, and became the proud parents of four children, all born in the month of September.

In 1961, when the couple opened "Ireland's Grocery and Grill" in a

little building on Highway 901 in "downtown" Union Grove, Myles took a day job at the nearby Iredell Department of Corrections, a job he held for twenty years. On his first day, Myles' boss told him to "Go get the cooks up and take them to the kitchen." When Myles asked him where the cooks were, his boss exclaimed, "Why, they're in the cook shack (prison slang for the camp cafeteria)." When Myles returned home that day, he and Pal renamed their store.

In 1989, J. P. Van Hoy—a member of the legendary family that has been bringing old-time fiddlers' and bluegrass festivals to the area for decades, and who routinely had breakfast at the Cook Shack—started playing guitar with Myles there on Saturday mornings. Three years later, they were joined by Bob Anderson on Dixieland banjo, and when other musicians began dropping by with their instruments, Pal joining in with vocals, the Cook Shack Saturday Morning Jam took root. It's a weekly happening that remains vibrant to this day and draws musicians from around the county and sometimes the world.

Much later, and well after they discontinued the grocery side of the business to focus on the grill and music, the Irelands teamed up with Tom and Gail Watts who began organizing evening concerts. While the list of the musicians and bands who have played at the Cook Shack is impressive, of equal importance is the pride that the Irelands and Watts feel for, in Pal's words, having "decided to help the passing-through bands get gigs," and for growing the Cook Shack into a musical melting pot.

But there's more to the Cook Shack than music. Inside is a visual feast—that is, if you love memorabilia. Entering this museum of souvenirs one just has to trust that behind the wall-to-wall mounted music posters, photos, and album covers (most dated many years ago) exist actual walls! And from the ceiling is suspended every conceivable object you can imagine. Then there are the aquariums and the menus filled with photos. Like the Smithsonian, you literally have to visit the place time and time again to take it all in.

One warm May afternoon in the late 1990s, Pal was announcing on Stage 2 of the Fiddler's Grove festival when in walked three guys from Switzerland wearing "lined wool shirts and heavy-duty corduroys." When they were given the opportunity to change into lighter clothes, the banjo player, not yet one hundred percent sure of his English, kept pointing to his wristwatch signaling, "No thanks, it's time to play." And when they began, Stage 2 became a magnet, drawing folks from all over the festival grounds. It was the Kruger Brothers, and "we've been friends ever since," says Pal.

When Uwe moved to America and was living nearby with Robert and Brenda Shepherd, he started to drop by the Cook Shack to play, often with Myles, with whom Uwe shares a passion for guitars. From those days to these, Uwe, Jens, and Joel have been dropping by the Cook Shack, as individuals on Saturday mornings when their schedules allow, and as the Kruger Brothers for special weekday evening concerts each year, usually in January, but this year in March.

"The Irelands are an institution," says Uwe. "They have the greatest jam sessions in the world, and Pal makes the best cheeseburgers in the world! And they brought back Cokes in the bottle before it became popular."

"The Cook Shack is their home—their living room—a virtual living museum. Once you start hanging out there, you get to know all their family—their kids, their grandkids, and their great-grand kids."

And from Joel, "When I moved to North Carolina, Myles and Pal were two of the nicest, warmest, big-hearted people that I have ever met in my life. They took me in, almost like a son. It's just incredible the love you get from those two people." ►



Helen White, Herb Key, and Wayne Henderson at the Cook Shack. Find event listings at:

<http://uniongrovemusic.voila.net/>

www.krugerbros.com

Venue Spotlight

Who was Hernando de Soto?

In March the Kruger Brothers are heading south for an event at the De Soto National Memorial in Bradenton, FL. Which makes you wonder: just what is the De Soto Memorial meant to remember? Turns out, it's a very good question.

by Glen Herbert

On a sweltering day in May 1539, Spaniard Hernando de Soto splashed ashore at Tampa Bay intent on capturing the riches of La Florida by any means necessary. His army of 620 men and 220 horses—and their dogs, and pigs, and canons and guns—disembarked at what is now Bradenton, FL.

They must have been a sight to see. Priests, craftsmen, engineers, farmers, and merchants, some with their families, some from Cuba, but most from Europe and Africa. Few had traveled outside of Spain, or even their home villages wherever they might have been, and to say they weren't the best travelers in the world would be a gross understatement.

As such, they were alternately welcomed and opposed by Native Americans throughout what is now the Southeastern United States, and there's little doubt why. Their smell alone would have perhaps made them unwanted guests, though over the next four years they would engage in a four thousand mile odyssey of intrigue, warfare, slave trading, disease, and discovery.

They were looking for gold and a passage to China. What they found was Appalachia, charting a path through an area where Georgia and Tennessee are today, before turning south toward the Gulf of Mexico in order to meet supply ships coming north from Havana.

The expedition then continued west to the hot springs of Arkansas, fighting virtually every step of the way. Arriving at the hot springs, de Soto's men and the Native Americans of the region decided to put down their weapons so that all could partake of the healing waters of the springs. It's easy to wonder why they couldn't have just left it at that, but the peace wasn't to last. De Soto claimed the area for Spain,

and the fighting began again in earnest.

In all, it was truly a bloody time in American history, and the barbarism of De Soto seemed to have no end. He was pursuing riches and glory, not discovery or settlement, and he did it through fighting, murder, thieving, slavery, and simply never taking no for an answer.

Ultimately, de Soto would become the first European to cross the Mississippi, and the first European to die there, too. Ironically, given the violence of his life, he died of fever on the western banks of the Mississippi in 1542. In order to keep up a facade that de Soto was a god—a story he used to gain submission from the Native American communities he encountered—his men weighted his corpse with sand and sank it to the bottom of the Mississippi. For all we know, whatever is left of him, is still resting there in the silt at the bottom. It was an inglorious end to an inglorious life.

The De Soto National Memorial was established in 1948 in order to preserve and evaluate the controversial story of the de Soto expedition and to allow others the resources to explore and interpret this unique, troubling, and puzzling period of American history. ►

The Kruger Brothers appear at the De Soto National Memorial in Bradenton, FL, on March 4.



And then he became a hood ornament ... conqueror of Peru, Florida, the Mississippi and points west, Hernando de Soto graces the hood of a 1952 De Soto Deluxe 2-door sedan.

First Person Singular

Finding peace in a Kruger song

Todd Taylor is a banjo player from Spartanburg, SC, who recorded a version of the Kruger Brothers' instrumental "Up 18 North" on his 2008 CD release, Bringing It ... Home. I asked him why he chose that specific piece to include as the first track on his CD. This is what he said:

Todd Taylor: "... that song 'Up 18 North,' when I first heard it, it touched my heart. I have a very rare terminal muscle disorder, but I keep beating the odds and the good Lord is keeping me here ... A couple of years ago, when I was very sick and they said I had only a couple of months to live, I heard Jens' song. It brought peace to my heart and made me feel so good, so I started playing it. From that day on if someone asks me who is one of my heroes in banjo, I always say Jens Kruger." ►

On the Web

Pickin' and Trimmin'

Preparing Dan's article about the Cook Shack for this issue put me in mind of a short film called *Pickin' and Trimmin'*. Produced by Matt Morris, it's a documentary about a barber shop in Drexel, NC that hosts local musicians, something it has done for literally decades. It's just one of those films—a story about a beautiful way of life that persists despite, well, everything. To see it go to the Kruger Brothers' site and click on the blog entry titled "Pickin' and Trimmin'." ►

In the (e)Mail

From Sarah Neville: "... we had our annual 'fix' last night in Bern. Just wonderful! ... And the whole time there is the feeling that here are three guys who just love to sit together and make music and it hardly matters what the location is and that there may be an audience." Thanks to Sarah for the note.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

Congratulations to **Mirjam Kruger**, Jens' and Christa's daughter, who married **Carlo Zanon**, Philip's nephew, in a ceremony in Switzerland over the holiday season. • The KBs are fresh from a very unique engagement: On Jan 27th they performed at **Weber State University** in Ogden, UT, in collaboration with the Weber State Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Michael Palumbo. Selections of Music from the Spring were also choreographed and performed in collaboration with **Imagine Ballet Theater**, also based in Ogden. • There is a nice feature article on the KBs coming up in the March issue of **Our State** magazine, North Carolina's premier magazine devoted to travel, history, people and places. The KBs were also the featured performer at the magazine's annual **"Best of Our State"** conference. • In January the KBs went to Anaheim, CA, for the annual **NAMM conference**. It's the biggest music industry conference in the world, and Uwe calls it "the greatest zoo on earth ... I can't really find words to describe it, but to see all these different musicians, instrument makers and dealers from all over the world showing off their stuff is just plain awesome." ►

In this Issue

If you're a regular newsletter reader you may have noticed that almost every musician we've profiled last year mentioned it, so in this issue **we continue our two-part profile of the Cook Shack**, a little roadside restaurant in Union Grove, NC.

On the Road

This month the KBs head west for the Wintergrass festival in **Bellevue, WA**. Wintergrass is a family-friendly bluegrass music festival held indoors: four stages, workshops, impromptu jams, and lots of great music. After all, it's still a long time until spring.



When Denis Larabie arrived in Switzerland in 1978, he found Uwe and Jens busking in a square in central Zurich. He then travelled and busked with them for the next two years. He says, "It's one of those times I'll never forget."

Feature

Old friends

In 1978 Denis Larabie met two kids playing music on the street in Zurich. It was a meeting that changed all three of their lives.

by **Glen Herbert**

Whenever Denis Larabie talks about the Kruger Brothers, he has trouble not referring to them as kids, and from his photo above, you can begin to understand why. When he met them busking on the streets of Zurich in 1978, that's pretty much what they were.

"I was busking all around Europe," says Larabie, "and I went to Bern, did a couple festivals around Bern, and then ended up in Zurich and, you know, there were the Kruger Brothers! They were sitting in the street playing banjo and guitar."

They were playing bluegrass fairly heavily, though even then, as Larabie notes, "they were mixing it up a bit. Similar to what they're doing now in a way."

Jens didn't yet speak English, so all the conversation went through

Uwe. "They were just children really. I kind of took them under my wing in a way. You know, I'm a bit older than them. I'm 10 years older than Uwe."

Together they formed the Rolling Grass Band and later the Rocky Road Band.

"We played Munich and Zurich a lot. A few other places around Switzerland, but in Germany mainly Munich."

There they busked on the Marienplatz, the main and very historic square at the centre of the city. For a time, they also shared an apartment just off the square and around the corner from the Haufbrau House, which remains a famous landmark.

"Somebody just loved our band," says Larabie, "and they gave us an apartment to stay in," on Maximilian Strasse, an upscale area of the city and not typically the home—then or now—for musicians making a living busking.

"You know, we'd bounce around a bit. We'd get tired of Munich so we'd go down to Zurich, and then after a while come back to Germany. We had a lot of fun. It was a really good experience for all of us. And we had a really hot band,

there's no two ways around it, it was a great band right from one side to the other."

The band included a bass player from New York, a mandolin player from England, Denis and Uwe on guitar and vocals, and Jens on banjo.

"We did a show on the street. You know, we'd run around, right hand to left hand we'd all change instruments. Stuff like that. And every time we played it'd look like a festival on the street. People would just come by the hundreds. Literally. They'd hang off the posts to see what was going on. It was a great time, and a great time in my life. One of those times you're never going to forget!"

"Jens, he's never changed. Every time I see him, he just lights up like a Christmas tree. But he was just 16 when I met him. Just a crazy little banjo player! When I heard Jens play, now I don't know a lot about banjos, but I knew then he was the best in the world. I just had a feeling [that] he's one of the best in the world. And I still think he is."

"But they were hot players even then. They were just the best. Those kids are just naturally born

with it. There's a certain genius to both of them."

Larabie eventually returned to Canada where he worked as a musician for many years, including a 20-year stint with a band based in Edmonton. Always wondering what the Krugers were up to, he found them online around 2007 and got in touch, calling to check in with them from time to time since then.

Through a mutual acquaintance in Alberta, last summer Jens and Denis got together in Canmore, nestled in the Rockies just outside Banff.

"There was just some connection. Even when I saw Jens after not seeing him for twenty-some years, we just looked at each other and had this perma-grin for two days straight. It's like a brotherly love of some sort" that persists despite the passing of time. While they have kept track of each other through phone calls in recent years, until last September, they hadn't met in person in 28 years.

And then there's the guitar ...

There's also an interesting postscript to this story. As you might imagine, money was tight in the busking days, and instruments, as now, can easily stretch a budget. With some money that Uwe's grandfather gave him for the purpose of buying a better guitar, Denis and Uwe shopped around and bought a Martin D-28.

Uwe used that instrument in the years he spent with Denis, though when asked to join a rockabilly band, he sold it in order to buy an electric guitar.

Denis, however, felt that the D-28 should be "kept in the family," as he puts it so, unknown to Uwe, he bought it from the person Uwe sold it to, brought it back to Canada, and has kept it all these years. It's the instrument he's holding in the photo below.

And, this summer, he gave it to Uwe. I spoke with Uwe not long after he received it, and he said playing the guitar was like reuniting with an old friend. Every guitar tells stories, and this one is no exception. Dings, scratches—each one sparked a memory that brought others flooding back. ►

Today Denis Larabie lives in Morinville, a rural community near Edmonton, Alberta.



Then and Now: Above: Uwe, Jens and Denis Larabie busk in front of the fountain in Zurich's Niederdorf district. Below: Jens and Denis when they got together in Alberta last summer.

Profile

Cook Shack, part 2: Tom and Gail Watts

To some, the shows at the Cook Shack might seem just that: shows. For the Irelands and the Watts', and indeed any who attend, it's a passion that, in so many ways, just works very, very well.

by Dan Shearer

Having first met at a rock festival (not the kind you're thinking of) in Spruce Pine, NC and now both retired from careers in administration, Tom and Gail Watts have been married for forty-five years. And while an interest in minerals and gems brought them together, a love of music has always been an important part of their lives and a driving force in their years after retirement. It was this passion that led the couple seven years ago to become sponsors and hosts for the evening concerts at the Cook Shack.

After being "caught up in the Chapel Hill folk music scene in the late 60s" then spending some musically dormant years, Tom and Gail rediscovered music when they became fascinated with local radio

stations, specifically the public radio station WNCW, where for the last twenty years they have worked, first as volunteers during fundraisers then after retirement as part-time employees. (WNCW is a popular station, perhaps best known for their Saturday afternoon show, *Goin' Across the Mountain*, where, incidentally, in 2004 I first heard the Kruger Brothers).

Not long after Tom, who has played guitar since high school (and old-time fiddle more recently), bought Gail a banjo at MerleFest in celebration of their 25th wedding anniversary, the couple found themselves jamming at a private home where they met Pal and Myles Ireland. (Tom is quick to add that as musicians, he and Gail are at "the front porch level.") The Irelands invited the Watts to join them at the Cook Shack for Saturday morning jams (in its early days when just a few musicians were dropping by), and the foursome have been friends and collaborators ever since.

One day while attending MerleFest years ago—before all of the acts were staged within the festival proper—Tom and Gail came across a group from Switzerland playing in a small tent pitched on the grounds outside of the main festival. Well, you know what it's like to hear the Kruger Brothers for the first time. The Watts introduced themselves, met them again at a Union Grove Festival, and now remember how delighted they were when, not long after the Krugers moved to America, the guys began showing up occasionally for the Saturday morning jams at the Cook Shack.

Having met quite a few artists of national prominence during their volunteer days with WNCW and nursing a desire to bring some of these musicians to the local community, Tom and Gail looked around the Cook Shack and realized that it was a perfect place for house concerts—a small, intimate venue with a sound system and chairs (no stage yet), plus the willingness of the Irelands to, in Tom's words, "give it a try."

The evening concerts at the Cook Shack began when Tom and Gail, frustrated that they were unable to attend a concert in Chapel Hill featuring three of the friends—founding members of the Red Clay Ramblers—invited the group to

play at the Cook Shack in between gigs.

The performance was a great success and was followed over the years by many well-known musicians, Robin and Linda Williams, David Holt, Wayne Henderson, and The Steel Wheels among them.

Each year the Watts host the Kruger Brothers at the Cook Shack for three back-to-back evening performances, usually in January, but this year in the first week of February. Often the Krugers invite a guest musician or two to join them on stage. A stage, was built just in time for the Krugers' first concert there, thanks to Philip Zanon. "I asked Miles, if it was OK if I build a bigger stage," says Philip, "and he agreed. So on show day I went to Lowe's and picked up two 4x8 sheets of plywood and a number of cinder blocks ... and headed to Union Grove." It's the stage, made sturdier etc., that remains in place to this day.

In organizing the twice-a-month concerts Tom and Gail's mission has been threefold: One, to expose folks to a wide variety of roots music, bringing in nationally known musicians who might not ordinarily play at such a small venue but who welcome the up-close contact the Cook Shack provides (so close that when Roy Book Binder, renowned acoustic blues guitarist, posted a photo of himself at the Cook Shack a friend commented, "Well Roy, did you get your shoes shinned while your were there?"); two, for the musicians to strive for a balance of entertainment and performance; and three, as Tom tells the musicians, "for you and the crowd to have as much fun as possible."

But perhaps what makes the concerts at the Cook Shack most unique, at least in my view, is the absence of the formality often demanded at large venues. The musicians can sit back and play, not only "for," but "with" the audience. And as Jens, Uwe, and Joel are quick to ask, "Why do they call it 'playing' an instrument if it's not supposed to be play?" ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

It's safe to say that it was an event unlike any others: last month the KBs teamed up with **Imagine Ballet Theater and the Weber State University Chamber Orchestra** to present selections from "Appalachian Concerto" and "Music From the Spring." Yes, you are understanding this correctly: two ensemble pieces choreographed and presented by a ballet troupe. It's the first time for this kind of thing, but given the reviews it garnered, it won't be the last. The event took place in late January in Ogden, UT. • The KBs spent a week at the beginning of February in residence at the **Banff Centre for the Arts** in Alberta, Canada. The stay included an impromptu performance at the centre as well as meetings and rehearsals in anticipation of the world premiere of Jens' composition "The Spirit of the Rockies" there this coming August. • The KBs were filmed recently during the Wintergrass Festival by **Fretboard Journal**. The video will be posted to the magazine's site within the next week or two. We'll also keep you posted on an upcoming feature story that will appear in the magazine. ►

On the Road

The KBs head to the sunshine state this month, beginning on the 4th with a date at the De Soto National Memorial in **Bradenton, FL**. Presented as part of the Concerts on the Lawn series, if you live anywhere north of the Mason-Dixon line, you probably won't want to know that this is a performance under the stars. No, it doesn't seem fair, does it. But should you get the urge to start spring early this year, the performance begins at 5:30, and don't forget your lawn chair. On the 6th they're in **Naples, FL**, at the Philharmonic Center for the Arts. And they're back in Florida on April 1 for a performance of *Music from the Spring* with the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra in **Punta Gorda, FL**.



Members of the Imagine Ballet Theatre in performance with the Kruger Brothers, January 27 in Ogden, UT.

Feature

The Ribbecke legacy

Tom Ribbecke is a person who has contributed to the Kruger Brothers sound, though you'd be forgiven for not having any idea who he is. But if you've heard the band in concert or on CD in any of the recent projects, then you're acquainted with his work: the bass that Joel plays is one that Tom built, a Ribbecke Halfling.

by Glen Herbert

Joel's bass is, in some ways, as unique as the Kruger Brothers themselves. Ribbecke called it a Halfling in reference to the two very distinct building styles that are used in the instrument, which has a flat-top on one half of the front, and an archtop on the other. It's safe to say that, at least at the moment, there is no other builder in the world who is making a similar design.

Ribbecke is indeed an outlier. Having earned degrees in music and communications, he perhaps came to carpentry later than others in the instrument building industry (such as Greg Deering for Deering Banjo, for instance, who is

responsible for the banjo that Jens plays.) Nevertheless, if there was any time lost, he's certainly made up for it. The instruments that bear his name reflect his passion, which is to hand-build custom guitars specific to the people who order them. Joel's 4-string Halfling, as well as his 5-string Halfling that we also see him playing from time to time, were built with Joel in mind, built to be able to do the things that he demands and requires of the instruments.

For the past 10 years of Ribbecke's 40-year career as a luthier, his studio has been located in a barn in Healdsburg, CA. Unique, and state of the art, it's a location that is familiar to anyone who has seen the reality television show "Guitar Planet." The premise of the show is that Ribbecke is training young, urban, at risk men to build fine instruments. It's a very rarified situation, and you get a very good sense of the kind of teacher and mentor that Ribbecke is.

"I want to get them to know their way around the shop ... before they burn it down," he has said on the show. It's really just part and parcel of a greater goal. "My

lifelong dream has been to create a teaching, research and development facility for stringed instruments of all types."

That's something he's always envisioned happening at the Healdsburg property, though with the property being sold, it's a dream that may not come true.

"I have until March to either buy this property or move," per the terms of the owner, something he found out just a month ago. For instrument builders, that's too short a deadline to build up that kind of capital. If necessary, he'll move elsewhere and carry on, though something will necessarily be lost. "If you have attended one of the Healdsburg Guitar Festival after parties, you know what an incredible place this is and the importance of its musical heritage. I have also taught here for many years. This place has allowed the students to release themselves completely into the learning process. I have also done the best work of my life here."

As I write this, everything is still very much up in the air and the clock continues to tick. In the meantime, as a way of raising funds, Tom Ribbecke is taking the

final 25 orders of his career as a guitar and bass builder. All will be built by him, and they will be the last instruments he makes before he moves into purely teaching, mentoring, and administrative rolls.

And though these will be the last instruments he builds entirely with his own hands, his legacy will live on with his involvement in Ribbecke guitars, and in the teaching and workshoping he does. And, you'll continue to hear it in every note that Joel plays. ►



Joel in studio with his Ribbecke Bobby Vega Halfling 4-string. He also has a Ribbecke 5-string, which he's been playing full time for the past 8 months.

Profile

Coming to America

Brenda and Robert Shepherd were champions of the Kruger Brothers even before they ever met, and they've been great fans and supporters ever since. This is the first of a 2-part profile of the Shepherds.

by Dan Shearer

You might say, thanks to Brenda Shepherd, the Kruger Brothers came to America on the Orange Blossom Special.

Three years after a chance meeting at a local drive-in restaurant, Brenda and Robert Shepherd, both North Carolina natives living in Wilkes County, married and moved into the house where Robert had grown up, on the grounds that one day would become the site for the Carolina in

the Fall festivals. While Robert worked for thirty years as a health inspector, his friends and neighbors are more likely to picture him then, and now, in the large garage on the property where he grew up working side-by-side with his father, fixing up used cars. (The now semi-retired Kruger Brothers blue van boasting more than three hundred thousand miles is a testimony to Robert's mechanical skill.)

Meanwhile, Brenda, after working many years in education administration, took a job at Wilkes Community College in the fundraising department where in 1988 she helped organize the first MerleFest, an event which was to be held at a single venue, the Walker Center, but attracted so many people (about 4,000) that they brought in a large flat-bed truck to serve as a second stage. They parked that truck right in front of "The Cabin" which MerleFest fans know is now a small stage right next to the Main Stage, but on that particular day The Cabin served as a place for the performers to gather before getting on the flatbed.

As MerleFest grew, the organizers decided to invite one international band each year, and in 1996, Brenda was assigned to find that band for the following year's festival. Fortunately, Robert and Brenda had met and befriended Swiss native, Kurt Stadlin (Kurt passed away last October and was honored by Glen Herbert in the November issue of this news letter).

Kurt told the Shepherds that he had seen the Kruger Brothers when they opened for Alison Krauss and Union Station in Europe and thought they might be a natural for MerleFest.

Because Robert had not yet heard the Kruger Brothers, during MerleFest 1996, following up on Kurt's recommendation, he asked Adam Steffey, mandolin player with Union Station, what he remembered about the Kruger Brothers in Europe. While Adam was telling Robert "what unbelievable people they were," Ron Block, banjo player with Union Station, overheard them talking and came over to say that while he couldn't remember the banjo player's name, he was a great one and that, "he (Ron) couldn't hold a candle to that boy's playing."



Above: Brenda and Robert Sheppard; Below: Brenda helping Philip run sound for the Krugers at Carolina in the Fall, a festival that took place on the Shepherd farm just outside Wilkesboro, NC.

Six months later Kurt gave Brenda some cassette-tape recordings he had made of the Kruger Brothers and two other European bands. On hearing the Krugers on tape playing Orange Blossom Special (the only tune on the tape), Robert exclaimed, "This has got to be more than three people!" And when Brenda played the recording at the college for her boss, B Townes, he remarked that it must have been speeded-up through some recording technique.

After several weeks of discussion between Brenda and Robert, one day Brenda declared, "Let's give them a chance," a decision that set in motion what some would say was the turning point in the musical journey of Joel, Uwe, Philip, and Jens.

Immediately, everyone went into high gear—looking for a way to bring the Krugers to North Carolina. Robert and Brenda's daughter, Monica, was put in charge of getting them a work visa, but when that effort failed, even with help from the late Honorable Senator Jesse Helms, and as the time for MerleFest was fast approaching, they realized that the only available option was for the Krugers to take a vacation – to America! So, as "vacationing tourists" these young musicians arrived a week before MerleFest in Charlotte, NC where, as the Krugers have described many times on stage, Robert, with Maynard Holbrook riding shotgun, picked them up.

Knowing the Kruger Brothers it comes as no surprise that after the long flight, rather than drive directly to the comfort of their

motel in North Wilkesboro, they asked to go to the college to "inspect" the stage they would be playing on. And after staying with the Shepherds in the now famous basement a few days, then trying out the motel, Joel told Brenda that they'd rather stay with them, much to the Shepherds' delight, because every night that the Krugers stayed in that basement they played until the wee hours of the morning.

And that set the precedent; for the next nine years every time the Kruger Brothers came to the United States, they made the Shepherds' basement their base "camp," playing throughout the night pretty much every night they were there. ►



Dan will follow with part 2 of this profile of the Shepherds in our next issue. In the meantime, feel free to contact us with thought on stories that you might like to see in these pages.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

Mark your calendars for a very special event at the end of August. On the 25th of that month, the KBs will premiere a new work titled "Spirit of the Rockies" at the **Banff Centre for the Arts** in Alberta, Canada. It is a commissioned work written around the concept of a growing awareness of beauty in the Rocky Mountain region at the turn of the last century. • **The Best of the Kruger Brothers**, a CD featuring highlights of their career as well as a new recording—a studio version of "People Get Ready"—will launch at Merlefest at the end of this month. ►

On the Road

They start the month with a number of dates in Florida, including a presentation of Music From the Spring on the 1st in **Punta Gorda, FL**, with the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Toshimasa Francis Wada. Then on the 2nd they travel to **Boca Grande, FL**, for a presentation of "Music From the Spring." On the 15th they're in Palm Beach, FL, for a presentation sponsored by the Society of the Four Arts before heading home to get ready for MerleFest in **Wilkesboro, NC**, from April 26th through the 29th.

Upcoming Dates:

May 16-28: Silver Dollar City, **Branson, MO**
 May 24, Stoughton Opera House, **Stoughton, WI**
 May 26, Bluegrass Legends Concerts, **Evanston IL**
 June 2, Strawberry Park, **Preston, CT**
 June 23, Old Historical Ebbs Chapel School, **Mars Hill, NC**
 July 7, Common Ground on the Hill, **Westminster, MD**
 July 8, Maurice W. Foulke Bandshell, **Souderton, PA**
 July 21, Stecoah Cultural Arts Center, **Robbinsville, NC**



The Carolina Theatre in Greensboro, NC, where the KBs played in late 2001. (See "Ten years after," below.)

Countdown to the Academy

Kruger Brothers Music Academy to be held Friday May 11 through Sunday, May 13 in Wilkesboro, NC. on the site of Double Time Studios.



It's full speed ahead toward the first Kruger Brothers' Music Academy. It's an immersion in music as well as the unique perspective that Joel, Jens, and Uwe bring to it.

They are of course no strangers to teaching, and all have taught privately and lead workshops through North America and Europe, including annual events in the UK. (For trivia buffs, the piece "Beautiful Nothing" began its life as a workshop study that Jens created for use at a workshop at a music camp outside Boston.)

The academy is a unique opportunity to provide instruction in an intensive setting. "Our aim for the academy is to have a place where people can come and really talk about music," says Jens. "Whether that's over lunch, in the classroom, during a jam ... the music comes first."

There are a few spots left, so if you are interested in attending, sign up through the site or call the Double Time office in North Wilkesboro at (663) 667-2800.►

Feature

Ten years after

The first time Jim Walton heard Jens play banjo, Jens was warming up backstage for a show at MerleFest. In an instant, he was hooked.

by Jim Walton

In 1994, I moved from Columbia, SC, to Greensboro, NC. I had always been interested in music, but I was now exposed to the bluegrass and traditional music of NC. In April of 2000, at the age of 47, I decided to buy a banjo and take lessons.

Fast forward one year and I am at Pete Wernick's Jam Camp, the week before MerleFest. The camp was great, and on Thursday when

the festival opened, we performed on the Cabin Stage. Then we went to a hospitality tent and played a few songs for the guests and dignitaries while they chatted and ate shrimp.

Shortly after that is where my memory gets fuzzy It was now our turn to chat and eat shrimp, but after a few minutes, I heard a sound that was both strangely familiar, and yet, foreign: It was Jens warming up on the banjo. I had trouble merging what my eyes and ears told me, with what I thought was humanly possible on a banjo. Like someone shooting a machine gun into a popcorn maker while it's popping ...

The first song they played was their rendition of "Darling Corey" and I was hooked, so I made sure to introduce myself and I got Joel's contact information. I had made a great friend that week at Pete's camp named Frank Fratoni, a solid rhythm guitar player from High Point, NC. Later that summer, he and I decided to try our hands at promoting concerts. We named our company "Shady Grove Productions."

I called Joel, we rented the Carolina Theater in Greensboro, and set the date. Now I wish this story had a happier ending, but it

doesn't. The date we chose was Tuesday, September 18, 2001—one week after 9/11.

We almost had to cancel, because Jens and Joel were stuck in Europe. I recall that Uwe had to leave home around 5:00AM to get to Atlanta, pick them up, and make it to Greensboro by the evening. To add insult to injury, I believe Uwe had also just had some dental surgery and was not feeling one hundred percent.

Anyway, they made it to town, we fed them some shrimp, and the show went on, and it was great.

In the years that have followed, I have become a big fan and friend of the Kruger Brothers. In the last 10 years, I have seen them play, conservatively, more than 50 times: From a restaurant in West Jefferson, to a small room in Thomasville, to a theater in Mocksville, to a living room in Chapel Hill. There was that church in Chapel Hill, and a bar in Asheville. From a festival in SC, to a concert with the orchestra in Hendersonville. And, of course, many times at Merlefest, Sugar Grove, Carolina In The Fall, Stecoah Valley, Tryon ...

In any case, I'll end by stating the obvious: The world has changed a lot in the past ten years, we've all a little bit older and wiser, but the Kruger Brothers remain some of the nicest people you could ever meet, and they sound perfect no matter where they play. ►



Jim Walton has since returned to Columbia, SC. He no longer plays banjo, but occasionally attempts to restore and play fiddles. **Frank Fratoni** lives in Greensboro, NC, and can be seen performing with the Diego Hillbillies.

Profile

Days in the field

In "Carolina in the Fall" Uwe sings that "in the hills of Carolina folks have opened up their doors." Two of the people who inspired that line by doing precisely that are Brenda and Robert Shepherd. Here Dan Shearer continues his two-part profile of the people that Uwe credits as one of the major reasons that he lives in North Carolina today.

by Dan Shearer

For the nine years after the Kruger Brothers played their first MerleFest in 1997, Robert and Brenda Shepherd made their home in North Wilkesboro the Krugers' "home away from home." For Uwe it became more like his only home, because he remained with the Shepherds when Jens, Joel, and Philip went back and forth to Switzerland.

"When I decided to spend more time in America so I could be with Rebecca, I thought about renting an apartment, but Robert and Brenda wouldn't have it—they insisted I stay with them. They became my parents, waking me up in the morning so I would have time to practice before I made my daily rounds which included Harold's (a popular local restaurant) and the pawn shop where I picked up many new tunes from other musicians who hung out there daily. Actually, for a while there we had a little band, mostly just for fun."

"I learned a lot from the Shepherds, and they learned a lot about me. I spent a lot of time with Robert who taught me about the American way of life – at least one way of that life. And while I did a lot of the cooking while I stayed with them, Brenda introduced me to Southern cooking – cornbread and cabbage, greens, sourwood honey, liver mush, stuffing, and let's not forget, fried chicken."

In a thoughtful and reflective moment, Uwe volunteered, "They and Rebecca are the reason I'm in North Carolina. It was hard for me to leave everything behind. Robert and Brenda helped ease the pain of that loss. They shared everything with me. I call Brenda 'Mom,' and their daughter Monica is like a sister to me. I still go to their

annual family reunions whenever I can."

The giving is reciprocal and includes all of the Krugers. For example, to this day, Brenda remains an ardent Elvis fan, and over the years the guys have brought her Elvis memorabilia whenever their travels took them to Elvis "sites." So you can imagine how delighted Brenda was when she, Robert, the Krugers, and Maynard and Hilda Holbrook visited Graceland.

Then there was the time, not long after they first met, when the Krugers invited the Shepherds on an extended visit to Switzerland. Brenda warmly remembers arriving at the Zurich airport and finding a smiling and waving greeting party of the Kruger family, standing behind the large glass wall. And during that visit, "Jens was so good to me, it made me feel bad," confesses Robert.

Lest you assume that these genuine, down-to-earth Southern folks are without a sense of humor, picture a Halloween not long after the Krugers came to America when the Shepherds got some of their friends (who happened to be police officers) to introduce the Krugers to an American tradition. The Krugers woke up the next day to discover the house had been "rolled."

Jens told me how grateful he remains to the Shepherds for their unconditional hospitality, especially during that chapter in his life when he first moved to America with his family, and the Shepherds took them in while they waited for their household belongings to arrive and for a more permanent living place to become available.

"The Shepherds opened up a door for me to another world," says Jens. "They showed us a mountain of support that was very unusual for us. Robert and I became instant close friends, talking every night about many things. He is extremely curious, and there was so much I could learn from him, even how to shoot walnuts out of the trees. He presented a world I was longing for. I remember the sense of freedom I felt, driving around the countryside with Robert in his old blue van, listening to 'Days in the Field,' one of Robert's and my favorites. It sounded better there than anywhere else. The music I wrote

fit exactly into Robert's world just as his world played such an influence on mine and my music."

"Almost everyone we met in North Carolina we met through Robert and Brenda," says Jens, "They provided a huge connection." That list of connections includes many of the people we've profiled in the Newsletter in addition to Doc Watson who in 1998, after a call from Brenda, agreed to let Robert drive him from Deep Gap to the Shepherd's house. There they sat and played together for hours.

And then there's Carolina in the Fall, an event first held in 2003 on Shepherd land after the Kruger Brothers, eager to play more for people in the area, declared, "Why don't we have our own festival so we can invite whoever we want."

After choosing the best site (much to Brenda's chagrin, one that included a "pile of old, dumpy cars") a team of the Shepherds, Krugers, Holbrooks, and David Taylor set about removing the cars, clearing and grading the land, sewing grass, building a stage, and generating publicity.

The festival, featuring the Kruger Brothers but including many other groups, continued for the next seven years, the final event being more or less rained out, although some of us felt that the impromptu regrouping of the musicians and diehard (and wet) fans that rainy Saturday in Robert's garage, where *Carolina Scrapbook Vol. 1* had been recorded, was the highlight of the festival. ►

Dan Shearer is a regular contributor to the KB newsletter, and is also the proofreader, editorial consultant, and cheering section. You can find him and his wife Kathryn at many KB shows, often helping out at the sales table. They live just outside Asheville, NC. The KBs return once again to MerleFest at the end of this month, where they continue to be favorites of the fans and the organizing committee. New this year is an hour of "Sunday Morning Songs" by the Kruger Brothers on the Traditional Stage, Sunday, April 29 at 10:30.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The Kruger Brothers were featured on the morning program of the CBS affiliate in Greensboro, NC, **WFMY's "Good Morning Show"** as part of their coverage of MerleFest. The trio were interviewed and played live to air from a vantage point overlooking the festival. • **The Best of the Kruger Brothers**, a CD featuring highlights of their career as well as a new recording—a studio version of "People Get Ready"—is now available through the online store. • We were saddened to hear of the passing of **Levon Helm** on April 19. His work in The Band was certainly on the KBs radar in the 1970s, and his work later in life continued to be an inspiration. ►



The restored hall of the Stoughton Opera House in Stoughton, WI. The Kruger Brothers play the vaudeville-era theater on the 24th of this month.

On the Road

The KBs start the month with a wonderful return to Silver Dollar City in **Branson, MO**, May 16-18. The shows there are a highlight for fans who make the trip each year to rekindle friendships, make new friends, and to hear lots of great Kruger music. On the 24th they return to another spectacular venue: the Stoughton Opera House in **Stoughton, WI**. Opened in 1901, in the early years the Opera House served as a setting for everything from high opera to vaudeville to temperance meetings. Recently restored through a community initiative, it is simply gorgeous. The KBs end the month on the 26th with a date at Bluegrass Legends Concerts in **Evanston, IL**.

Upcoming Dates:

June 2, Strawberry Park, **Preston, CT**
 June 9, Highland Brewing Company, **Asheville, NC**
 July 7, Common Ground on the Hill, **Westminster, MD**
 July 8, Maurice W. Foulke Bandshell, **Souderton, PA**
 July 21, Stecoah Cultural Arts Center, **Robbinsville, NC**
 August 6-11, Goderich Celtic

Feature

Best Of

The first ever retrospective collection of Kruger Brothers material was launched in late April.

by Glen Herbert

It's possible that the concept of "best of" isn't nearly as clear as we might think it is. Of course, every one of us might disagree on exactly what should be included. There are tracks the banjo players would include that, say, the lovers of the vocal material may not, and vice versa.

One of the reasons, I think, is that we all have our own musical vocabularies; there are those things that we know well and which we enjoy more so because of that. A Celtic musician will be drawn to "Cork Harbor" while a person with an interest in the music of New Orleans may be more drawn to the instrumental "Nola" from *Behind the Barn*. As such, we all bring a bit of ourselves, our musical language, to the music that we hear.

What's interesting, I think, is that so do the Kruger Brothers. The tracks that they have chosen to

include in this collection may say as much about them as it does about the success of some of their recordings. It's telling, for example, that three of the songs here came to the Krugers through the recordings of Doc Watson: the guitar classic, "Black Mountain Rag," "Alabama Bound," and a song from very early in Doc's career, "Honey Babe Blues." Doc recorded this last song with Clarence "Tom" Ashley for the Folkways label. At the time Doc was relatively unknown, though that wasn't to last long. Through those sessions for Folkways he met Ralph Rinzler who then brought Watson to the attention of a national audience.

In contrast are two songs that were pop hits. "Long Black Veil," was a part of the KBs early

performing repertoire, though something audiences haven't heard much recently. It was a Top 40 hit for both the Kingston Trio and Joan Baez. "People Get Ready" was a pop hit too, but on the R&B charts of the mid to late 60s, famously written and recorded by Curtis Mayfield, and famously covered by Rod Stewart.

So, yes, this is a collection that skips across musical genres, from pop, to folk, to R&B; from a chamber piece "The New Country," to a bluegrass breakdown on "Running Down the Mountain." All over the map? You could look at it that way, I suppose, and perhaps that would be an easy thing for a crass reviewer to say. But it would imply that there isn't anything connecting these pieces, which couldn't be less true. The selections reflect how the Kruger Brothers have conducted their musical career and the paths down which their musical interest has taken them. The selections also reflect their own musical vocabulary and the range of interest that they bring to their work.

As Joel has said about their work as artists and performers, they often feel that their role is to share their discoveries with their



audiences, as if saying “look at this, look at what we found.” I think this CD comes from that same place. All the selections were guided by the same hands, by the same curiosities, and in so doing they all help to tell the larger story of the Kruger Brothers. There are some tracks that others would include, and it’s understandable that no two listeners would choose the same things. But when it comes to the Kruger Brothers, I think that’s what “Best Of” means—the curiosity, the interest, and the music. ►

“Best of the Kruger Brothers” was released formally on May 1. It is available through the online store, at concerts and other sales venues.

Profile

A place to play

Main Street Music & Loan isn’t your average pawn shop. Then again, North Wilkesboro isn’t your average town.

by Dan Shearer

Jens’ comment years ago about how, when he first arrived in America, he would drop by and play at the pawnshop in North Wilkesboro puzzled me. It didn’t fit my stereotypic image of a pawnshop—you know, seedy side of town, bars on the windows, dark inside, with a suspicious old man peering out from a small opening behind the counter. So recently, when Uwe, in describing his routine while living with Robert and Brenda Shepherd in the “early days,” included a daily stop at the pawnshop to play, I decided to see for myself.

Earlier last month, Mike Palmer, “pawnshop” owner, met me at his shop in North Wilkesboro. As I entered the place, my pre-conceived notion of a pawnshop vaporized. The place was open, well lit, no bars on the windows, with counters full of power tools, and friendly, conversational locals coming in and out. With the walls in one section adorned with hanging banjos and guitars of all varieties and values (someone dubbed it the “Wall of Sound”), I could easily picture the Krugers sitting down and jamming with other musicians, most likely in the room that had become a music studio.

Mike was born and raised in North Wilkesboro where he and Cathy, his wife of thirty-five years, raised two children. Cathy and one of their children, John, work at the shop. Growing up, Mike never wanted to leave Wilkes County so, after working in textiles, then the mirror industry where he achieved his goal of becoming a company Vice President, he left corporate America, hung up his coat-and-tie, and bought half interest in Jerry Minton’s “Minton Pawn and Music.” Ten years later Mike bought out Jerry and changed the name to “Main Street Music & Loan.”

Becoming part owner of the shop allowed Mike to build on his interest in music by converting a large storage room into a music studio, where eleven years ago the first Friday morning “Hometown Opry” radio show was aired. Mike is proud to name a few of the musicians who have played on the show – most notably, Doc Watson, Rhonda Vincent, Ricky Skaggs, Wayne Henderson, regular George Hamilton IV, and a local band called the Kruger Brothers, who more than once bailed Mike out by filling in for a band that cancelled at the last minute – one time when Mike called them at midnight as they were arriving in Charlotte, telling them, “Boys, I need a band.” The Krugers arrived at the shop promptly at 6:30 AM.

But just as important, Mike created a setting, as Ted Lehmann put it on his blog back in 2010, “...a place where local musicians hang out, and ones on their way through town stop in to chat, and maybe trade an instrument.” Mike is one of those musicians. His love of

music has its roots in his dad’s barber shop where, as a kid shinning shoes (twenty-five cents a pair), he learned two valuable lessons from “Foots,” the in-shop shoe shine man, – how to “pop a rag” and how to play blues on the guitar Mike’s grandmother bought for him.

Early on, Mike formed his own band, first called “Extra Measure,” then “Banknotes” in honor of a song written by Bill Young (who Mike gives credit as the driving force behind MerleFest,) and finally, “NC Thumbpickers.” Nourished by his love of music and talent for production, like so many other “behind the scene” workers, Mike’s involvement with the Hometown Opry, MerleFest, and Carolina in the Fall put him in touch with many musicians - local and not so local, famous and not so famous.

Mike is not sure exactly when or where he first met the Kruger Brothers, but he recalls it was, not surprisingly, through Brenda Shepherd, and he remembers it was soon after the Krugers first came to America to play in the 1997 MerleFest where Mike served and continues to serve as MC on some of the stages. In those early days, before and after Mike became part-owner of the shop, Uwe came by almost daily to give guitar lessons, and Jens, Uwe, and Joel, after moving to America and eager to become a part of the Wilkes County community, often came by to jam. Lately, with their demanding schedule, the Kruger Brothers “just don’t have the time to drop by more than occasionally,” although Mike hopes to book them soon for the Hometown Opry.

If I were in charge of tourism in North Wilkesboro, I would not hesitate to put Main Street Music & Loan on the must-see list of attractions. ►

First Person Singular

Meeting at Minton’s

Uwe remembers some of the lessons he learned at Minton’s.

Uwe Kruger: “Every Tuesday morning I would go to the shop and give lessons to Carol Minton, and soon I had more students. Jerry Minton gave me a room to teach in, and the teaching then brought in customers for a completely new

line of products: instruments. They had another, full-time teacher Larry, who basically took care of all the kids and beginners, working in some back office (he still does), and I taught more advanced students.

To be at the pawnshop was a great way to get to know Wilkesboro, as it was a great supplement to all the other places people invited me to visit and play. The shop is a microcosm of society. Sitting there by the counter and playing my guitar I was able to watch the world in a different light; I think I learned a lot about how people interact and conduct themselves when they are not doing too well. People from all walks of life come into the shop for all sort of reasons. Some are there to get quick cash, some are hunting for a good deal, and some are there just to not be alone for a while.

Mike turned the back part of the shop into a music store and got official dealerships for Martin, Fender and Gibson, and since his music business was really just a sideline, he was able to give people some very good deals. I helped him by trying out instruments, and helped him decide what kind of accessories work and how different kinds of strings sound. It got to a point where people would stop by just because they knew when I was there, they could get a neutral opinion on any question regarding instruments. I was able to establish some wonderful friendships over the years and meet a lot of the local musicians, play with them and learn from them. The informal setting of the shop was ideal. Jerry and Mike ran a good business together, and I learned a lot by watching both sides of the counter closely.

When Jens, Joel and Philip moved to Wilkesboro a few years later, my schedule changed dramatically, and the time I had to spend at the shop diminished quickly. But I still buy all my strings at the shop, and go in once a while for a chat. I saw young John Palmer, Mike’s son, grow up in the store, and he is now helping his Dad run the business.” ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



Mike Palmer on the MerleFest Cabin Stage.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

We were deeply saddened to hear that **Doc Watson** passed away on May 29 at the age of 89. (See "Doc Watson" this page) On Thursday, the KBs were contacted with the news that Doc specifically requested that Charles Welch, Wayne Henderson, and the Kruger Brothers perform at his funeral. Of course, the KBs were struck by such an immense honor, and they are grateful that they will have a chance to mark Doc's memory with their music. The funeral will be held in Deep Gap, NC, on Sunday June 3. • The Banff Center for the Performing Arts in Banff, AB, Canada, will host the premiere of Jens Kruger's "**Spirit of the Rockies.**" This will, in really any way you choose to look at it, be a singular event in the history of the Kruger Brothers. For details see the KB homepage which also links to the announcement by the Banff Centre. • The first **Kruger Brothers Music Academy** was held on the weekend of May 11. More than 30 students attended the weekend. Given the success, this will no doubt be the first of many Academies to be held at the Kruger Brothers home base, the Double Time Studios in Wilkesboro, NC. (See "Academy," page 3, for recollections from Warren Grafton, who attended the event.) ►



Jens backstage with Doc Watson, October, 2011.

In Memoriam

The long journey of Doc Watson

He was with us for so long, it's hard to believe that he's gone.

by Glen Herbert

It's perhaps easy to underestimate the impact that Doc Watson has had over the course of his career, in part because of the ways we choose to express it. We like superlatives—first, longest, fastest, best. He's credited as the first to play fiddle tunes on guitar, and certainly he was influential in that regard, though it's likely that, if not Doc, someone else would have shepherded the fiddle repertoire onto flattop.

His true legacy lies not in whichever posts he may have passed first, but in the person and the performer that he was. Humble, talented, giving, rational. He often mentioned that if it were not for his blindness, he likely would have become an electrician. His love for

his wife was palpable, and his rootedness in his religion, while never cloying, was real and deeply felt, bringing him to tears on stage at times when discussing it.

He was also a walking encyclopedia of Appalachian song, having grown up in a local culture that in his youth was largely beyond the reach of mass media and recorded music. He often recalled that the first record he ever heard was one by the Delmore Brothers. So, while there were records, the fact that he can remember the first one he ever heard is evident they weren't yet abundant. Instead, he was one of the last of the generation that learned music from people rather than a record player. (The album *The Doc Watson Family* is the first recording made of him, and brilliantly documents the kind of music and the songs that were in the air when he was growing up.)

He strayed from that music, later learning much of his performance repertoire from recordings, but the thread of his childhood music was one that ran throughout his career. He mentioned his disbelief that there was really an interest in

those old songs, but there was, and many of them are the pieces that he is most remembered for today. He learned "Down to the River to Pray" from his grandmother. His father made his first instrument in 1934—a small fretless banjo stretched with the hide of his grandmother's cat—and taught him to play "Rambling Hobo." Doc remembered in a 1988 interview with NPR's Terry Gross that, at the time, his father told him that he needed to learn the instrument because "it might help you get through the world."

It was the real deal, and it's safe to say that there isn't really anyone born today that will learn music in the same way. It was an approach to music that allowed songs to grow, and to change, and for musicians like Watson to use them to communicate their own ideas and concepts. His "Shady Grove" isn't exactly like the version he heard, or exactly the way that other people may play it. But as he did with all of his repertoire, he "added a few notions" here and there, ultimately making each song indelibly his own.



In so doing, he brought others to an appreciation for the music of his home, and provided a tangible foundation for much of the roots and Americana music we hear today. Whether or not he was the first to play fiddle tunes isn't nearly as important as the effect that his playing those tunes had on so many that heard them. He got some of his notions from guitarists Grady Martin and Hank Garland, yet it's Watson's name that we remember. His was a sound that was pure and infectious.

His singing had a similar effect. He came to national notice during the folk revival, but like some others—John Hurt perhaps especially—he didn't approach music with a studied earnestness, and his object wasn't preservation; he played songs not to demonstrate them, but in order to touch people, and it was the emotion, the stories, and the humor that audiences took away from his performances. Watson often said, especially later in life, that he conducted himself on stage just as if he were sitting in his living room. And indeed that's exactly how it felt, whether in an audience of a few, a few hundred, or a few thousand.

Those are the reasons, I think, that so many have found him such a compelling mentor and musical inspiration. He embodied an approach and a message that others simply wanted to participate in. His approach is one that has had legs far beyond anything we may imagine. Jens and Uwe Kruger, growing up in Switzerland, wanted to be Doc. And despite all of the places their music has taken them, in a way that's something that remains. The *Best Of* collection the KBs released this year includes three songs that come to them directly from Doc.

And whether listeners are aware of it or not, his music is very much alive even in the present day and is used in the same way that he used it: to convey an emotion, tell a story, and to move an audience. A gospel song that Doc wrote with his wife, "Long Journey" was recently a hit of sorts for Robert Plant and Alison Krauss on their Grammy-Award winning "Raising Sand." "Down to the River to Pray" was a hit at the time of the Coen brothers film "Oh Brother Where Art Thou" and one that Alison Krauss learned from Doc. His is an

impressive legacy, and one that will be with us for a very, very long time. ►

Doc Watson died on Tuesday, May 29, at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, NC. He was 89.

First Person

Remembering Doc

Joel: "I was not really familiar with Doc Watson until I was 'introduced' to him through Uwe and Jens. After we were invited to perform at MerleFest in 1997 and had a chance to sit with him and pick some, only then did I get to experience what a truly amazing human being Doc was. Over the course of the next 15 years we had many opportunities to visit with Doc and Rosa Lee in their home and became good friends of the family. To watch the joy on their faces as we sat and played many of the old songs that they knew and grew up with was truly a blessing. On more than one occasion when we were visiting, Doc would go down into his basement and bring up Merle's banjo, which he then gave Jens to play on. It was unbelievably moving to watch the tears rolling down Rosa Lee's cheeks as she heard the familiar sound of that old banjo ...

It was one of my greatest honors to be Doc's bass player on many occasions locally here in North Carolina. He was always encouraging and thoughtful of his fellow musicians and showed all of us just how to be in front of an audience. He was an absolute Master Craftsman. I would hope that I can say that I'm a little bit of a better person having been able to call Doc Watson a friend of mine."

Uwe: "Doc Watson was the first guitar player I remember listening to thinking 'I want to learn how to play and sing like that!' Through all my playing and performing since I was a teenager, I always had someone to turn to when I got lost and questioned my own abilities as a musician. And when life was unbearable sometimes, his recordings never failed to bring me back to reality and putting a smile on my face again.

It was in 1986, I think, when Jens and his wife Christa and I formed the Appalachian Barn Orchestra.

From our first rehearsal on we incorporated Doc's music in our repertoire, and that was also the time I started to buy every Doc record available at the time. The first time I heard of Doc was much earlier though, 1976 in the summer our family moved to a place in the country. The previous owner had left a stereo system behind, along with a few records, mostly Swiss folk music and marching band stuff, but one record was labeled "Strictly Instrumental," and it was Flatt & Scruggs featuring Doc Watson. When that needle hit the vinyl and "Pick Along" came out of the speaker, my life changed, and so did Jens'! We had heard Flatt & Scruggs before, and I remember hearing a track of Doc's on a Folkways sampler around about 1972, but this was the first time I was able to listen to a whole record of his music. I tried to copy some of his solos of course, but until this day I have never succeeded in getting it right (yet?).

Of course I learned over the years that one cannot copy another man's thinking or playing, but his musicianship always remained my guiding light. I saw him perform in Zurich with Merle and T. Michael Coleman the year before Merle died, and spent a great evening with Merle after the show. I was way too shy to speak to the master himself, but after that evening I knew what I had to do. I got me a new acoustic guitar (I played mainly Stratocaster at the time), put a pick up in it, and started to practice again.

Doc's singing was even more important to me than his picking. His delivery was so honest and straight forward, it really touched my heart. I believe that there never was a more accomplished folk artist on this planet, and when I finally got to meet him in 1997 and spent a whole afternoon and evening playing and singing with him at the Shepherd's house in North Wilkesboro, it was back to the woodshedding for me again. I had thought that I was a pretty decent picker at the time, but really had to reevaluate my priorities after that day.

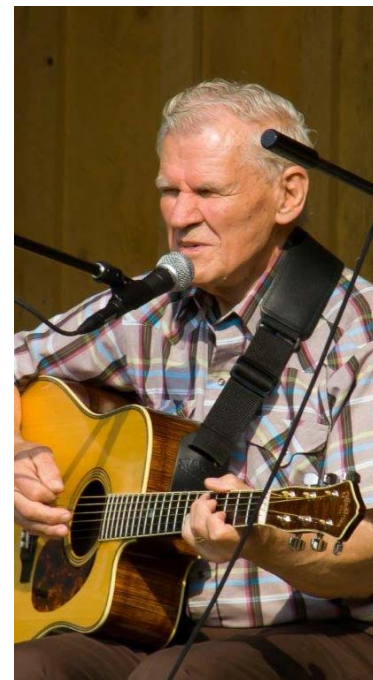
Thanks to Doc's honesty I learned the language of the people here in Western North Carolina, about their way of life and the way they conduct themselves. He showed me that no matter what one's handicap is, there is always a

way to pull through in decency and honor.

He never showed me a lick on the guitar, but talking about music and playing and sometime even performing with him through the last 15 years were the best music lessons I ever got. So many things go through my mind right now, but I just want to mention two things that were very important to our development that he said. We asked him what we should do to be successful here in America, and his answer was 'Just keep doing what you are doing now, and everything will turn out right!' And that's what we did, and that's what happened. The other thing I think of every day is a remark he once made to us at his home in Deep Gap: 'It takes me a long time to come up with something that's worth playing for people.' And if it takes Doc a long time to do so, it takes forever for someone like me. Keeps me from giving up.

I don't remember how it feels to live in a world without Doc Watson, but I will have to get used to it now. Like all the other people whose lives have been changed by his work and his humanity, I will miss him very much. His memory will now live forever in our hearts. I feel extremely lucky to have known him, and I am thankful for every second I got to spend with him and also with his wonderful wife Rosa Lee.

And now I will put my headphones on and quietly listen to 'Shady Grove' once more ... " ►



Profile

Making guitars, making music

Wayne Henderson has lived his life in a community with a population of eight people. His guitars, however, have made him famous around the world.

by Dan Shearer

Five hundred and sixty-six guitars, 118 mandolins, 16 ukuleles, 15 banjos, 4 fiddles, and 4 dulcimers, but who's counting? Where did some of those guitars go? Just to name a very few: Eric Clapton, Tommy Emmanuel, George Hamilton, IV, and Uwe Kruger, not to mention Doc Watson, who up until his passing was seen playing his Wayne Henderson guitar (and is the one that is seen in Doc's hands in the photo on the previous page).

Plenty of articles have been written about Wayne. In fact, in 2005 Allen St. John wrote a book titled *Eric Clapton's Guitar: Watching Wayne Henderson Build the Perfect Instrument*. But this is what I learned last month sharing a booth with Wayne at the Cook Shack.

Raised on a farm in rural Southwest Virginia, Wayne went to grades one through seven in a two-room schoolhouse that you can still see from Wayne's house in Mouth of Wilson. Then on to high school in a building where the border of Virginia and North Carolina ran right down the middle of the main hallway. Wayne likes to tell the story that, unlike folks trying to evade the law crossing the state line, unruly students couldn't avoid detection by crossing that border. Don't know why he knew that.

You might say that Wayne's musical career began at age five when he met and heard E. C. Ball, a "great guitarist" (owned a Martin!) who lived nearby and who soon became an inspiration to Wayne. Not long after that meeting, Wayne's brother Max bought the 1939 Gibson Recording King guitar that E.C. had earlier sold to a relative. Max gave the guitar to Wayne and showed him his first three chords – you guessed it – G, C, and D. Wayne recalls having to lay the guitar on his lap and play it with only his thumbs. Back home when his dad realized Wayne could

play, he brought out his fiddle from storage, and Wayne learned to play backup.

Then at around ten years old Wayne met Catherine Reddy, a neighbor across the road. Catherine introduced Wayne to Carter Family tunes, according to Wayne, the only tunes that were played back in those days. While Wayne still credits E. C. Ball with inspiring him, Catherine also played a very important role in Wayne's life, because, "She was the only real guitar teacher I ever had."

As early as he can remember, Wayne liked to whittle and carve and was always looking for that special piece of wood (he still is). In fact, he made all his toys. Growing up around music and getting a taste of playing with the Gibson, at age seven Wayne decided to combine his interest in music and carving and made his first guitar – a cardboard box attached to a neck carved from a two-by-four with fish lines for strings and pegs carved from wooden blocks.

The next guitar of significance that Wayne remembers making began when, as a young teenager, he "borrowed" the walnut veneered bottom to one of his mom's dresser drawers. (Wayne didn't mention what his mom thought when she found the drawer bottom missing.) Now he had the raw material, but it remained a mystery to Wayne as to how to bend a piece of wood so it would keep its new shape. Well, Wayne experienced a serendipitous moment when, after he put the sheet of veneer on a tree branch overnight, the ensuing rain did its magic. Wayne worked throughout the summer on that guitar. To bond the wood he found some glue his dad used to hold rubber striping to car windows and doors, and for frets he hammered copper wires flat. Unfortunately, the summer humidity took its toll on the glue, and one day, the entire guitar simply sprang apart.

Not long after that "experiment," Wayne's dad took him to meet Albert Hash, the fiddle maker. Not only did Albert tell Wayne the proper kind of glue to use, but he also gave Wayne an old catalogue from Chicago which featured various kinds of guitar woods. Plus of even greater value, he gave Wayne an old mahogany door – the same kind of wood used to make Martins. Wayne was delighted!



The brand marking for Henderson #1, made from an old mahogany door and inscribed freehand. Uwe's Henderson is serial # 371, and the one that Doc played in his final years is #369. Both guitars were in the finishing spray booth at the same time, and the necks on both were made from the same piece of wood.

Wayne spent the next three years making his first "real" guitar, mainly from that mahogany door. Finally in 1984, at the age of seventeen, he inscribed the serial number "1" on the finished product. While through the years Wayne has parted with many guitars, he's never parted with that one. ►

We'll continue next month with what Albert Hass told Wayne after Wayne showed him his "Number 1."

Mailbox

Academy 2012

Warren "Doc" Grafton sent this review of the Academy weekend the day after returning home.

The Kruger Brothers Academy was an unbelievable experience. We arrived at Double Time Music Studio where we visited with the Kruger Brothers and the other participants. The Double Time Music Studio is a beautiful structure set in the mountains of North Wilkesboro, NC.

I was in the guitar session. For three hours on Saturday morning Uwe showed us more chords, techniques, and licks than I can remember. In the afternoon Uwe held a "Master Class" for the guitar players. Uwe had each of us sit in the "hot seat" and play a song for him. Then he gave constructive criticism to each of us while the others watched and were able to ask questions. All of us gained

useful knowledge and techniques both by sitting in the "hot seat" and by listening to the suggestions Uwe made to the other participants.

That night we were treated to a concert by the Kruger Brothers and some of their musician friends, Maynard Holbrook, Charles Welch, and Laura Boosinger. Maynard has a beautiful tenor voice and hit notes I can only wish I could sing. After the concert we were invited to jam by a bonfire out on the lawn and stay as long as we wished.

... It was an incredible weekend. Uwe, Jens, Joel, and friends gave us beautiful music and wonderful instruction. Philip Zanon is a fantastic sound engineer, and the sound and acoustics in the studio are phenomenal. All the friends and family members who helped serve meals and performed other chores were a well-organized team and did a fabulous job. The Krugers, their families and friends were great hosts.

This trip was my 75th birthday present from my beautiful wife, Carol, and was one of the best birthday gifts I have ever received. ►

Doc Grafton wrote to us from his home in Bossier City, LA.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The KBs have been added to the lineup for the **Red, White and Bluegrass Festival** in Morganton, NC. They will appear at 2pm on Tuesday, July 3. • Two new covers of KB songs were released this spring: On their recent release, *Born at the Right Time*, the **Kingston Trio** included their version of "Forever and a Day." And last month, **Steve Spurgin** released his recording of "Carolina in the Fall" on his CD *Folk Remedy*. (For more, see "Covers" p. 2) • The KB's will be playing a charitable event on August 26 in Canmore, Alberta. The event is in support of the **Mary A. Tidlund Charitable Foundation**. The foundation identifies, financially supports, participates in medical and educational programs in Canada and overseas. The foundation also has a mandate to alleviate poverty. It's a great cause. • We've just received more stock of the **2012 Kruger Brothers' t-shirts and ballcaps**. They are on sale at concerts or through the KBs online store at krugerbrothers.com. There are a few guitar picks left too, first come first served. • Uwe has launched his new blog, and you can find the first entries on the Kruger Brothers' homepage under **Uwe's Blog**. He will add posts from time to time about life on the road, work in the studio and, well, pretty much anything that catches his imagination. ►

On the Road

June 30 – July 4, Red, White & Bluegrass Festival, Morganton, NC

July 5-6, Eastern Music Festival, Greensboro, NC

July 7, Common Ground on the Hill, Westminster, MD

July 8, Maurice W. Foulke Bandshell, Souderton, PA

July 21, Stecoah Cultural Arts Center, Robbinsville, NC

August 6-11, Goderich Celtic Roots Festival, Goderich, ON

August 25, Banff Centre for the Arts, Banff, AB



Jens with Laura Boosinger at the Academy weekend. This photo was taken by Julie Macie, and you can spot some of her great shots in the slideshow on the KB homepage as well. For more on Laura Boosinger, see "Down the Road" p. 3.

Feature

The story behind "The Spirit of the Rockies"

In 2011, Jens was invited to create a work for the Banff Centre, a commission that recognizes his ability as a composer, arranger, and performer, but also his unique ability to combine seemingly disparate cultural and musical traditions within his work. This past month, he put the finishing touches on "The Spirit of the Rockies," a piece which will premiere at the Banff Centre, in Banff, Alberta, on August 25.

by Glen Herbert

"The Spirit of the Rockies" tells a story (more on that below) but the real core of the work is less about an actual narrative than it is a consideration of how, and why, we appreciate the world around us.

The history of the Rocky Mountain region provides the perfect context. As Jens has said, "for the English settlers," who were the first European population to

settle the region, "the wilderness was something to be conquered." Trade routes, rather than ski trails, were what they were after. Europeans came in search of wealth, carried here on trains riding the 3000 miles of steel ribbon that recently linked one ocean with another, spanning the continent of North America.

Then, a handful of mountaineers arrived in Banff from Switzerland at the request of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). Their job was to bring their skills to bear in the Canadian Rockies and to make the mountains accessible to tourism, enabling others to experience their beauty and majesty. It was a considerably larger task than the CPR envisioned at the time, though in the end the guides exceeded every expectation that had been made of them. While at most there were just 35 guides at any one time, their numbers belie the impact that they had then, and continue to have now, in Canada's Rocky Mountain region.

The Swiss guides made mountaineering history in Canada,

and they created and pioneered the culture of appreciation and preservation that persists there today. Between 1899 and 1954 they led hundreds of first ascents and taught safe climbing techniques to thousands of climbers from around the world. In the 1950s and 1960s a second generation of guides, many of whom literally descended from the first, became crucial to the development of modern mountain guiding, rescue, safety, avalanche control, and skiing.

"They brought an awareness of beauty," says Jens. "Just like we need a friend or a parent to say 'look at this view,' we often need someone to help us recognize beauty as such," a role that those early guides filled through an influence that continues to this day.

It is that historical period that provides the setting for the work, which begins as a man thinks back to when he first arrived in the Canadian Rockies to work as a guide. There he fell in love, from a distance, with a young woman who mysteriously went missing. We listen as he recalls how his brief

encounter with her forever changed his perceptions of himself and his place in the world. A defining time in his life, it is one that all these years later he still struggles to fully understand.

It's a story of discovery, about how a new land, and a new perspective, can lead us to find new things in ourselves. "The spirit of the Rockies," says Kruger of the mountains themselves, "is our own falling in love and our own understanding of beauty. ... [The understanding that] we are part of this world, and it is a part of us."

Jens has scored the piece for chamber orchestra, guitar, bass, and banjo, and the staging is being completed by directors at the Banff Centre. ►

For tickets and information, visit the Banff Centre website at www.banffcentre.ca

News

Covering the Kruger Brothers

This spring saw the release of two covers of Kruger Brothers songs: The Kingston Trio with "Forever and a Day" and Steve Spurgin with "Carolina in the Fall"

by Glen Herbert

Kingston Trio

It's hard to believe that no one has covered any of the Kruger Brothers' songs before now, but if you've got to start somewhere, it's quite a place to start. The Kingston Trio famously wore stripy shirts and were at the center of the folk revival of the 50s and 60s. (They were also the first performers to ever win a Grammy in the Country Music category, with "Tom Dooley" in 1959. Really, you can look it up.)

Say what you will—and certainly there has been lots said about them over the years—the success of the Kingston Trio is impressive by any measure. They introduced literally millions of listeners to music and musicians that they had never heard before. They were the first to record "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" in the complete version we know today, and racked up number-one hits, one after the other. In the early 60s, the Kingston Trio accounted for 15% of the sales for Capitol Records, far outstripping other Capitol artists,

www.krugerbros.com



On stage at the Wayne Henderson Music Festival in Mouth of Wilson, VA. From left to right: Jens, Wayne Henderson, Charles Welch, and Uwe. Photo courtesy Jean-Pierre Cousin.

including Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole.

Despite lots of personnel changes through the years, their latest album continues in the tradition they are known for: close harmonies, clean arrangements, and choosing songs that work, often by songwriters who are not always in the national spotlight. And in that regard, there are some stand-outs on *Born at the Right Time*, an album released this past April, including a beautiful song by Keola Beamer—"Real Old Style"—a fantastic slack-key guitar player who is a hero in his home state of Hawaii, yet lesser known on the mainland. It's a spare arrangement, beautifully sung. Here too is a great, very close and clean version of the Stan Rogers classic, "Barrett's Privateers." Just when you thought that there wasn't anything to add to this song, the Trio has found a way to make it sound fresh and alive.

And, happily, there is a very nice version of the KBs' "Forever and a Day" here too.

Steve Spurgin

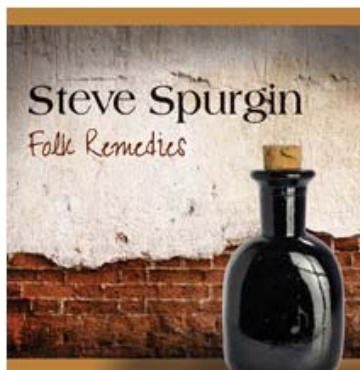
Steve Spurgin is an artist and songwriter who is best known in bluegrass circles. In the 80s he was a member of California, a band that included Byron Berline and Dan Crary, that won three consecutive IBMA Instrumental Group of the Year awards. After a successful run, Spurgin focused on songwriting, and his songs have been recorded by many artists, including Gene

Watson and Reba McEntire. Spurgin's song, "A Walk in the Irish Rain" has been recorded by dozens of artists, including the Irish Descendants.

So, if his name isn't as well known as some, Spurgin is nevertheless an artist who has put in his time as an instrumentalist, a singer and a writer. On his latest release, "Folk Remedy," he offers his take on the Kruger classic, "Carolina in the Fall."

Before you've heard it, you might wonder how someone can successfully pull off a song that is so close to the Kruger Brothers, but he does. I'd say that he even finds something new in the song, and he brings out an aspect of the narrative that we haven't heard before. He takes the song further from its roots than do the Kingston Trio with their cover, but that's what makes Spurgin's recording more interesting.

And at the end of the day, isn't it about time that other performers begin picking up the work of the Kruger Brothers? ►



Profile

Wayne Henderson pt. 2

Here Dan Shearer continues his profile of the life and work of master luthier, Wayne Henderson..

by Dan Shearer

We left off last month when, after working three years on the project, seventeen year old Wayne finished making his first "real" guitar (#1), using glue that Albert Hass, the fiddle maker, told him about and an old mahogany door Albert gave him.

When Wayne showed Albert the guitar, Albert "was very impressed" and told Wayne, "If I'd knowed you done that good I'd have give you some better wood." So for Wayne's second guitar Albert ordered some of that better wood, rosewood, which Wayne gladly accepted, then set to making his #2 guitar and sold it for \$40. "I've been making guitars fulltime ever since," says Wayne.

Five guitars later, in 1968 at age twenty-one, Wayne made Guitar #7 out of rosewood with pearl binding and abalone shell, patterned after a Martin D-45. Looking back Wayne declares, "It was the best sounding one I'd made. And I still have it; I bought it back." Here's the story:

When Wayne took the guitar to his grandmother's house after his grandfather died, the local moonshiner was also visiting. The moonshiner had a stranger with

him who had heard about Wayne's guitar, and being a good player himself, after playing #7 offered to buy it. Clever Wayne "priced it real high - \$500 - so I wouldn't have to sell it." That seemed to do the trick and the stranger left. But later, he returned, played the guitar again, then pulled out five one-hundred dollar bills. Wayne couldn't turn him down - couldn't afford not to accept the offer. Imagine a twenty-one year old back then, living and working on a farm, getting five hundred bucks!

But that's not the end of the story. Wayne told me, "Some time later, after the guitar had changed hands several times, it came in for repairs - beat up real bad. So I made an offer of a few hundred dollars, which the guy took. The guitar laid around untouched for a couple of years before I repaired it."

While Wayne had heard about the Kruger Brothers, he didn't meet them until he was doing a benefit "for a Frenchman" (Pierre) at the Walker Center at Wilkes Community College where the Krugers were also playing. "I was very impressed with them, and after learning how to pronounce their names, became good friends. Now they play at my festival, and I used to play at theirs (Carolina in the Fall). Can't think of anybody who can play better than them. They are some of the most respected professionals I know. Don't know anyone I admire more. They're right up there with Doc, Chet Atkins, Flatt & Scruggs, and Bill Monroe. But the best thing is that I've gotten to know them."

Given Uwe Kruger's fascination with guitars, it's not surprising to learn that one of the first places he visited back in fall of 1997 after the Kruger Brothers' first MerleFest was Wayne's shop in Virginia. "I was quite impressed with how he builds guitars and the number of beautiful instruments he had in the shop," says Uwe. "He built my guitar (#371) after he finished Doc's and Allen St. John's, the guy who wrote the book about Wayne making Eric Clapton's guitar. But for my guitar, I asked him to build a bigger neck, which he did, but later I decided it was too big and brought it back to Wayne. He set the guitar on his lap, brought out a knife, and for the next five hours whittled the neck down to a size that is just right for me. I call him

the Stradivarius of the steel string guitar. He's always striving for perfection, looking to build his next guitar better than his last, and he cares just as much for the appearance and craftsmanship inside the guitar as on the surface."

Uwe notes that while Wayne built his reputation on building guitars and being in Uwe's words, "an incredible picker," his ability to repair guitars is just as important. For example, Uwe told me how Wayne repaired Mother Maybelle's 1927 Gibson L-5 - the one on which she recorded "Wildwood Flower" after they found the guitar under Johnny Cash's bed, not long after he passed away. Then there's Hank Williams guitar that Wayne repaired.

"And Wayne's a real gentleman and a generous one, always having time for whoever drops by or calls," says Uwe. "Like his guitars, he's just as nice inside as on the outside. While you may not hear this from Wayne, he's built many guitars for area kids who couldn't afford one. I consider him part of our family, and I think he feels the same way. To play with Wayne at Doc's memorial last week in front of many other well known guitarists was simply great." ►

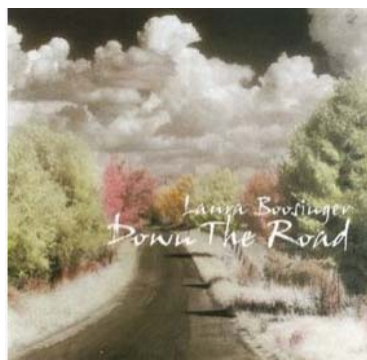
Desert Island Discs

Laura Boosinger's *Down the Road*

What would you take with you to a desert island? Well, if I had a CD player and somewhere to plug it in, one of the discs I'd take would be Laura Boosinger's Down the Road.

by Glen Herbert

Down the Road doesn't announce itself with any great fanfare, even despite the fact that some of the players that appear here—including Mark Howard, Aubrey Haynie, the late John Hartford, and



the late Roy Husky Jr.—are ones that other artists might plaster across the CD cover. But here that's fitting, because it is the music, not the licks, that Boosinger wants her audience to register first. And, on this disc, we certainly do.

The tracks are chosen to honor some of the players and recordings that have been instrumental in the history of Appalachian music, but the disc itself is not a museum. Rather, it is a delightful presentation of some beautiful material by such a wonderfully skilled musician.

Boosinger is a very fine claw hammer banjo player, remaining very faithful to the traditions of North Carolina (she is seen in duet with Jens on page 1). That playing is demonstrated in songs like "Italy," "Dixie Darling," and "Josie Girl" with all the pops and pings that make it such a distinctive sound.

The thing that shines through on every track is the voice of Laura Boosinger—both as a singer and an interpreter—someone who loves this music, and it shows. In the liner notes to this CD she writes, "For me music is a tool of communication, a bridge to cultures I may not have otherwise known."

But, as a scholar of Appalachian folk songs, this album really is her presenting a world that she knows, using the music as a tool to demonstrate it to new audiences and allowing us a view of a culture that we might not otherwise know. That's something she does in many different ways, including many of her workshops.

At MerleFest and elsewhere each year she presents shape-note singing. At the workshops she takes a group of people made up simply of anyone who attends, teaches them the basics of reading shape notes—a pictorial version of solfege or "do-re-mi"—and by the end of the hour, has them singing in harmony to songs from the Sacred Harp. It's wonderful.

And *Down the Road* is too. It's the kind of album that sounds effortless, and listening to it makes you feel less like entering a new world than it does entering Laura's porch and just whiling away a beautiful sunny afternoon.

In any case, fans of the Kruger Brothers will also know her work from the recordings that she has done with them which appear on

the *Carolina Scrapbook*, "Little Sadie," and on the *Carolina Scrapbook Gospel Edition*, "Lord, Build Me a Cabin." ►

For news, information, as well as concert and workshop listings, visit Laura Boosinger on the web at <http://www.lauraboosinger.com/>



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The Kruger Brothers have been included in an exhibit in the **Doc and Merle Watson Folk Art Museum** located in the Old Cove Creek School in Sugar Grove, NC. The museum collects artifacts and stories related to Appalachian Folk Art and the music and lives of Doc and Merle Watson. The KBs are proud to have a story board about their musical career included in the museum. • The KBs played alongside Charles Welch, Wayne Henderson and others in a tribute to Doc Watson at the annual **Musicfest n' Sugar Grove**, a festival held on July 13 and 14 in Sugar Grove, NC. The festival is one that has been closely associated with Watson, with proceeds going in part to fund the Doc and Rosa Lee Watson Scholarship benefiting students enrolled in the Appalachian State University's Sustainable Development Program. Watson had been scheduled to play the festival on July 14. ►



A curtain call at a performance of the Appalachian Concerto in Greensboro in July. From left to right, Scott Thomas Lesser, Cassie Bequary, Elizabeth Stefan, Erik Malmquist, Uwe, Joel, and Jens. Photo by Julie Macie.

Venue

Goderich Celtic Roots Festival

How's this for international: a trio formed in Switzerland, resident of the US, come to Canada to play at a festival celebrating the music of Ireland. Oddly enough, it makes more sense than you might think.

by Glen Herbert

The Goderich Celtic Roots Festival has long been a source of pride for the people of Goderich, Ontario—where it has run since 1992—though you'll be forgiven for never having heard of it. You'll also be forgiven for scratching your head at the idea of the KBs playing a festival that has a mandate to celebrate "the music, craft, and culture of the Celtic nations, immigrants of which form a strong historic background to Huron County."

But Huron county is in some respects (geography aside) not all that unlike so much of the eastern United States. It was where people came to build a new life. Many of them were Irish fleeing the effects of the potato famine, others were

Scots just looking for some room to spread out.

They brought their music with them, and as a result there are many pockets of traditional music in Canada that find their source in Celtic music. Cape Breton is the most famous example, though the Ottawa Valley is equally rich and consistent. April Verch is from the Ottawa Valley, thought it's possible that more people are aware of her these days than are aware of the valley.

It's that dissemination that makes the Krugers such a good match. The festival is for people who like music and who have an ear cocked to the more traditional sounds and instrumentation. And they want to have fun on a Saturday night, too.

That's exactly what Goderich is all about. Irish Music Magazine has said that "Goderich is a town of spacious avenues, haunting generosity, wide smiles and open doors." (Hmm ... sounds a bit like Wilkesboro. And a bizarre bit of trivia: Walt Disney's father, Elias, was born in Goderich, and Walt visited family there when he was young. The downtown is said to have been one of the models on which Walt later based his Main Street USA in the Disney theme parks.)

The festival has grown over the years, though has done so almost in secret, avoiding the gaze of nearby urban audiences, of which Toronto is one. And that's just how the people of Goderich like it. It's one of the things that gives the event such charm.

Festival events take place in a park overlooking Lake Huron. This year marks the 20th anniversary for the festival. ►

For information on the festival, visit celticfestival.ca. The Kruger Brothers will appear at the festival on Friday August 10 at 5:15, and on Saturday the 11th at 9:30.



On the Road

August 6-11, Goderich Celtic Roots Festival, **Goderich, ON**

August 25, Banff Centre for the Arts, **Banff, AB**

August 26th, Cross Zee Ranch, **Canmore, AB**

September 8, Mountain Song Festival, **Brevard, NC**

September 12, Spencer Miller Concert Series, **Abingdon, VA**

September 22, Street Music on Paris Avenue, **Port Royal, SC**

October 5, Oklahoma International Bluegrass Festival, **Guthrie, OK**

October 11, Prescott Park Arts Festival, **Portsmouth, NH**

October 12, Boothbay Opera House, **Boothbay Harbor, ME**

October 20, Ashe County Arts Center, **West Jefferson, NC**

November 16, Douglass Theatre, **Macon, GA**

Profile

Who is Cassie Bequary?

It's likely not a name you've heard (yet) but Cassie Bequary is a young and extremely talented violinist who instantly caught the ear of the Kruger Brothers. She appeared with them last month in Greensboro, playing first violin for a performance of the Appalachian Concerto.

by Dan Shearer

"Who wants to play with the Kruger Brothers?" asked Mara Gearman of the eight chamber orchestra Scholars in residence at the Eastern Musical Festival (EMF) in Greensboro, NC. Mara is the Assistant Principal Viola at EMF and this summer's Scholar Quartet Coach. Cassandra "Cassie" Bequary was one of the first to say, "I do."

Cassie, now twenty-five, was born and raised in Waterbury, Connecticut by a dad who is a stained glass artist and a mom, a school principal. While neither parent was a musician, as is often the case with child prodigies, her grandmother was an accomplished pianist who had a profound and lasting influence on Cassie.

It follows that her parents would try to interest Cassie in piano, but that was not to be. Instead, at age five, Cassie saw a violinist on TV, and instantly decided that was for her. Her parents bought her a violin—a 1/8 size, which means (and I found this hard to believe) just what it says—a violin 1/8th the size of a regular one. Soon Cassie was enrolled in a nearby Suzuki School, a program she continued for five years. But it was transferring her instruction to the woman who taught the youth orchestra in which Cassie played that brought about "a life-changing experience." Cassie studied with her for the next five years.

After attending one year at the local high school, Cassie received a scholarship to Choate, a prestigious boarding school in Wallingford, Connecticut. Then on to Oberlin College and the Conservatory of Music in Ohio, again on a full scholarship, where she took a double major in English and Violin. Of course, throughout all of these years Cassie played in a variety of

musical settings, including full and chamber orchestras.

After graduating from Oberlin, Cassie entered the Masters Program at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and this May earned her Masters in Music degree. "I've been teaching since high school," says Cassie with pride, "and while earning my masters, my students, many of them young kids, grew to forty in number, including some guitar students, after I learned to play guitar in San Francisco."

Then sometime this past spring, her best friend, a faculty member of Guilford College in Greensboro, told her about the EMF Scholars Program, a project which gives young musicians the opportunity over a five week period to play music and learn from EMF's faculty members, to participate with the EMF orchestra, to mentor in Chamber Music with select faculty members, and to become actively involved in community outreach, for instance, performing at the city's library branches. Cassie applied, and along with seven other young musicians from around the country, was accepted.

The invitation to play with the Kruger Brothers came suddenly and gave the quartet, which included Cassie, 1st Violin, Erik Malmquist, 2nd Violin, Elizabeth Stefan, Viola, and Scott Thomas Lesser, Cello, very little time to prepare. In fact, having received the musical score only the night before they were due to rehearse with the Kruger Brothers, while in the car on the way to the Krugers' studio the quartet hurriedly practiced the notes (without instruments). According to Carrie, the rehearsal was a blast, as was the second rehearsal when the Kruger Brothers came to Greensboro.

And the actual performance in a downtown Greensboro theater's black box "was the most fun we've had all summer. The Krugers encouraged us to improvise and be creative." By improvise Jens told me that he means sticking to the notes but having the freedom to be free with the sounds and the notes. Cassie continues, "The Krugers go so fast! It was really fun and exciting catching up!" When I asked Cassie which movement or sections she liked the best, wondering if she would like my favorite, she said, "I really don't have a favorite; I love

the one I'm playing." No kidding; that's what she said.

Jens told me, "I extremely enjoy working with young musicians. For me it's a rejuvenating process. I was so pleased to play with such an exciting quartet. I'm always observing what the leader is doing at the moment. And Cassie, who as 1st violin is really the soloist, played and led with such warmth, personality and intelligence—rich in energy. She's not just concerned about herself but committed to understanding the piece, staying in the spirit, always looking around at the others, hoping to see that spirit reflected in them." (What he didn't mention was how Cassie played with such movement that Jens, in self-defense, had to scoot his chair over.)

So, it's back to San Francisco for Cassie, where she'll take her first real break from being in school for the last twenty years, and if you had the pleasure of watching her perform like I did you'll trust that she's got an exciting and rewarding professional career ahead of her. ►

Desert Island Discs

Steve Spurgin's Folk Remedies

You never know, but Steve Spurgin's Folk Remedies might be the best album of 2012. But then again, you never know ...

by Glen Herbert

We could probably argue at length if we wanted to about what makes good music good. Despite the fact that we all have different tastes, different opinions, we feel in our bones that we can recognize good music when we hear it.

We think we can recognize the other kind, too, though we're all probably wrong in that belief. Frank Zappa once famously called the Shaggs "better than the Beatles." For most people, I think it's safe to say, the Shaggs' album *Philosophy of the World* is a touchstone for how bad recorded music can get yet still attract fans. Pluperfect awful. As such, I can't help but wonder what Zappa saw in it that I don't?

The reason I say all of this is because I've been listening to Steve

Spurgin's new album, *Folk Remedies*, which is, I think, simply brilliant, and I feel pretty confident in saying that. The guitar work is breathtaking, the writing stellar. At least I think so. I can't stop listening to it in the car, on my ipod while walking downtown. I'm listening to it on my computer right now.

That said, I know that there are lots of people who won't think that way. It's a quiet album that doesn't intend to break any land-speed records. The material here isn't going to grab anyone by the throat; it doesn't shout and you can't dance to it. You have to sit down and listen to it.

Still, I think it's up there with the best of Gordon Lightfoot, an artist who is clearly an inspiration to Spurgin, and to whom I suppose he's compared from time to time.

It's also an album that goes places. Spurgin is from Texas and has made a career as a song writer in Nashville, but this album has thoughts of Nova Scotia, Texas, Ireland; the desert, the ocean; booze, gambling; praise, complaint and comment. People do good things, people do bad things, but in a quiet way like you and I do. There's a folk instrumental ("Sunset on the Sierra") and a blues ("God Bless those Desert Rats") though the collection is beautifully even, with the inspired bass of Missy Raines. Of course there's a Kruger song here, too, a beautiful version of "Carolina in the Fall."

But ultimately the success of the album isn't in the chops, but rather the honesty with which the whole thing is delivered. Spurgin is experienced enough and wise enough to know that this album is not going to get him on Letterman, it won't sell a million copies. But he made it, and he sings about things that are important to him.

It's quiet, but the thoughts cut very close to the bone. At its best moments, this album is like an exhalation, a sigh. It's a chance to pause and think about some things that are important to us. And to my mind, that's pretty much as good as it can get. ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The Krugers went to Alberta, received white hats, and performed a new work. This issue of the newsletter is devoted to that event: the **premiere of *The Spirit of the Rockies***. • We're happy to see that two of **Laura Boosinger's** albums, including "Down the Road" which we featured in our July newsletter, are now available on iTunes. Laura is a great fan and friend of the Kruger Brothers, and she also appears with them on stage from time to time. She generously donated her time to appear at the Kruger Brothers' Music Academy this past spring, offering her talent and her insights to the students in attendance. • Renowned western sculptor **Vilem Zach** was commissioned to create a companion piece to "The Spirit of the Rockies" (shown below and right). Born in Prague, Czech Republic, Zach lives and works in Calgary, Alberta, as he has for more than four decades. ►



On the Road

September 8, Mountain Song Festival, Brevard, NC
 September 12, Spencer Miller Concert Series, Abingdon, VA
 September 22, Street Music on Paris Avenue, Port Royal, SC
 October 5, Oklahoma International Bluegrass Festival, Guthrie, OK
 October 11, Prescott Park Arts Festival, Portsmouth, NH
 October 12, Boothbay Opera



"The Spirit of the Rockies" premiered at the Banff Centre on the evening of August 25.

News

The KBs premiere *The Spirit of the Rockies*

On August 25th the Kruger Brothers premiered something that is for them, and perhaps everyone, a very different kind of work.

Fans came from throughout North America and beyond—Florida, California, Hawaii, NC, ON—to see a one-of-a-kind event: the premiere of a new work by the Kruger Brothers at a truly world class arts venue, the Banff Centre for the Arts in Banff, Alberta, Canada. As Jens said when introducing the piece, it was a very special night because "there is only one world premiere!"

But, for those in the audience, what made the event truly special was the music itself. Moved to an indoor venue, the Eric Harvie Theatre, due to near freezing temperatures outside, the evening began with a number of selections from the Kruger Brothers' songbook as well as a portion of the Appalachian Concerto.

Then, after an intermission, the KBs were joined by musicians in residence at the Centre, fourteen incredibly talented classically

trained young musicians handpicked by the Banff Centre from their summer residency program (violins, violas, cellos, flute, trombones, French horn, percussion).

The initial segment was orchestra only and they introduced the major musical themes—a series of broad, sweeping melodies that was, in a sense, an overture to the work to follow. Black and white photos of mountain scenes, chosen by the Kruger Brothers, acted as a back drop to the entire stage, described by one viewer as "just incredibly evocative." The photos were selected from the archival collection of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

The balance of the piece was comprised of a series of transitions between huge symphonic melodies, down-to-earth lyrics sung by Uwe, First Nations sounds and even a percussion solo.

The audience was overwhelmingly enthusiastic and gave a rousing standing ovation at the completion of the piece. One audience member's reaction overheard afterward was "It was ****ing fabulous with a few sections of sheer brilliance." This

from a person who was, prior to the evening, unfamiliar with the work of the Kruger Brothers.

The Banff Centre musicians said afterwards that this was one of the most fun projects they had ever experienced. As an encore, they joined in some brilliantly fun jamming of Tennessee Ernie Ford's "Sixteen Tons" which perfectly capped off the performance. ►

A video of the concert will soon be available on Banff Centre LIVE! Website. See:

<http://www.banffcentre.ca/live/>

News

The KBs receive their white hats

In an Albertan tradition—not unlike being screeched into Newfoundland—the KBs were celebrated with a White Hat Ceremony, noting their arrival in Alberta.

by Judy Collinson

On Sunday August 26, the Kruger's performed at a fundraiser at the Cross Zee Ranch in Canmore, AB hosted by Dave Anderson in honor

of the Mary A. Tidlund Charitable Foundation. To kick off the evening the Kruger Brothers were "White Hatted" in a humorous ceremony that extended to them the warm hospitality and wild spirit of Calgary and the Canadian Rockies. They even played a cowboy tune later in the evening in honour of their handsome new cowboy look! The White Hat Ceremony is a long-standing tradition in Calgary, a symbol of the Western hospitality and good cheer they like to share with visiting guests. The white Smithbilt hat has been bestowed on numerous celebrities and dignitaries on their visits to Calgary, most notably to "Will and Kate" during their visit to the Calgary Stampede in 2011.

The tradition started in the 1950s, when Calgary's Mayor, Don MacKay was inspired by the white hat after traveling to Toronto with 250 excited Calgary fans to see the Stampeders compete in the 1948 Grey Cup (the Canadian Football League championship game). The exuberant group sported white cowboy hats, which soon became a hit with easterners, and presented a hat to Toronto's mayor as a way of saying 'thanks' for the city's hospitality. Years later, when he was mayor of Calgary, MacKay began distributing them to visiting dignitaries. ►

Venue

The Banff Centre

The Banff Centre is the foremost arts education facility in Canada. It's also one of the most innovative, inviting artists and arts administrators to come, test out new ideas, create new works, and work collaboratively together. Sounds like a great place for the Kruger Brothers, doesn't it?

The mission of the Banff Centre is to inspire creativity. Set high in the mountains of Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada, the centre hosts artists and leaders from around the world to create and perform new works of art; to share skills and knowledge in an interdisciplinary environment; and to explore ideas and develop solutions in the arts and leadership.

Arts programs are at the core of The Banff Centre. Programming supports the commissioning and creation of new work by individual artists and arts collectives, and

www.krugerbros.com

provides resources for collaboration and applied research. Training and professional development at the post-graduate level in more than a dozen art forms including Aboriginal arts, music, theatre, dance, opera, literature, ceramics, print-making, painting, papermaking, photography, sculpture, audio engineering, digital film and video, and new media. Work is showcased in public performance, events, and exhibitions throughout the year, culminating in the annual Banff Summer Arts Festival.

This year, the Kruger Brothers' premiere of the Spirit of the Rockies was the final event in the Summer Arts Festival.►

Profile

Strings across the border

It's perhaps another example of worlds colliding: some of the best young string players in Canada, chosen for residency at the Banff Centre, joined the Krugers in workshop, rehearsal, and performance. If they weren't aware of the Kruger Brothers before, they certainly won't forget them now. While in Banff for the premiere, Dan Shearer took a moment to ask four of the players what it was like to be involved with such a new and unique work.

by Dan Shearer

Since *Music From the Spring* premiered in 2007 in Bangor, Maine, the Krugers have played across the county and in Europe with many orchestral ensembles – full orchestras for the performance at Bangor and string quartets for the Appalachian Concerto (with the exception of their performance at Ogden, Utah with a twelve-member string ensemble). Often, their musical partners have included accomplished, young adult musicians who have been chosen to become summer musicians in residence with an established orchestral program, such as the Eastern Musical Festival in Greensboro, NC or more recently the month-long summer program with the Banff Festival Orchestra.

My conversations with these young musicians have very much impressed me and left me with



The KBs get "White Hatted" in Banff, Alberta. From left to right, Jens, Joel, Uwe, and Philip.

observations that are consistent across my interviews: One, the musicians have all jumped at the chance to play with the Kruger Brothers, in many instances not even having heard them or heard of them. Secondly, and in support of that leap, is a strong, almost zealous desire, one often born of frustration, to play "out-of-the-box" – to break the mold, to apply (maybe even set aside) their classically trained backgrounds in favor of new, unconventional genres. And finally, sheer unbridled enthusiasm – a youthful spirit that fits perfectly with the Krugers' style of playing while they perform...or maybe it's the other way around.

Take MacKenzie "Kenzie" Slottow, Luke Krafka, and Katie Rife who played flute, cello, and timpani (drums) respectfully in the fourteen-member ensemble at Banff. Kenzie, the single flutist, recalls, "As soon as I heard they were bluegrass, I was in. Playing in genres other than traditional orchestral repertoire is more appealing." That preference was echoed by Luke who had never been to Banff but was invited there to play in a "Bluegrass Opera" with the Kruger Brothers only two weeks before the actual performance, when he summed it all up, "Branching out is fun."

Then there's Katie whose been coming to Banff since 2005, who when asked if she was willing to play with a Bluegrass band replied, "Of course; don't know if I'll ever get a chance to do it again." (And I wonder if she'll ever get another chance to play timpani in front of an audience the way she was "allowed to" (Thank you Jens) in that delicious two minute un-

scored, improvised duet with Josh Day, the Kruger's unofficial fourth band member.) And representing Kruger Brothers' fans, I couldn't resist the urge to gently explain to these young folks that while "bluegrass" is included in the Krugers' repertoire, it does not define their music, but unfortunately remains a label they can't seem to shake.

And what was it like playing with the Krugers? "Great writing" says Luke. "Sometimes it sounds like a Bach bassline, a fugue, sometimes a trace of Shostakovich and sometimes funky. Playing with them encouraged us to not so much look at what's going on, but to listen to each other. This has just been a really great experience, not worrying about keeping up appearances – a joy to play with them." Kenzie agrees, "Everyone with the Kruger Brothers has a contagious love of life – it emanates from them. And they're not distracted by little stuff. When I talk to Jens I can sense his feel for beauty. He doesn't follow all the rules; he has a totally different style and left me feeling that I don't have to fit into a mold."

And from Katie, "Amazing – I'm going to miss playing with them. They are phenomenal musicians—fantastic and challenging to work with—wonderful people." That about says it all. ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The **Snyder Family Band** are friends of the Kruger Brothers, and were profiled by Dan Shearer in the July 2011 newsletter. Zeb, a fantastic guitar player, made it to the second ballot for the IBMA guitar player of the year award and Owen made a video about it. As Owen's father, Bud, captions the video, "He dressed himself, set up the camera on a tripod and came up with this clip all on his own. We found the video on the camera this week." And then he let fly. See:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaC2DJSympY>

• We had nice note from **John and Cathy Duda** who used "Moon Over Switzerland" as their wedding song. A great choice, for sure. John writes with thanks to the KBs for their music. Nice. The motto of DTM music (as in the logo above) is "nice music for nice people," and notes like that from John just prove how true that is. Congrats to John and Cathy on their marriage. ►



A really nice shot of Jens from last summer. This photo and other photos we've added to the Kruger Brother's website were taken by Julie Macie, a wonderful photographer and great fan of the KBs.

On the Road

October 5, Oklahoma International Bluegrass Festival, Guthrie, OK
 October 11, Prescott Park Arts Festival, Portsmouth, NH
 October 12, Boothbay Opera House, Boothbay Harbor, ME
 October 20, Ashe County Arts Center, West Jefferson, NC
 November 16, Douglass Theatre, Macon, GA
 November 17, Diana Wortham Theatre, Asheville, NC
 November 30, Chalmers Church, Kingston, ON
 December 1, Molson Canadian Studio at Hamilton Place, Hamilton, ON
 December 2, Hugh's Room, Toronto, ON
 December 15, Madison County Arts Council, Marshall, NC
 January 18, Carolina Theater, Durham, NC

Listening In

When a song becomes art

Art: noun - the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance.

by John Lafferty

I'm drawn to different types of music but my favourite is music with lyrics, that is, songs. Songs that resonate most powerfully for me are those where the music interacts with the words affecting me emotionally so that afterwards I am not the same. I am somehow transformed to an understanding of what the singer is saying that affects how I think and feel. The transformation can be of a deep or spiritual nature but it does not have to be. I am equally drawn to clever and humorous songs that put a smile on my face. Either way, the artistry of words and music together is what creates the magic.

The Kruger tune "Watches the Clouds Roll By" is one such song but in stopping to really listen I discovered more ingenuity than I had first supposed.

It starts with an instrumental section in C major. Just a sprinkle of attention getting banjo notes hesitatingly building into a cascade running down to A minor and then ramping back up to C major using the song's secondary vocal tune. As if to say "Now that I have your attention, we'll get started."

All four verses are sung to the primary vocal tune repeated twice for each verse. The verses describe everyday events giving them narrative power. The pictures in my imagination are skillfully painted with the words.

*The clover still glistens with morning dew
 His feet are all wet in his old leather shoes
 He's been fixing the fence since early this morn
 It's time for a coffee back home
 It's a beautiful day with plenty to do
 All is the same and everything's new*

*He takes off his cap, looks up to the sky
 And watches the clouds roll by*

*Her shift has just ended at the all night café
 She takes off her apron and calls it a day
 I'll see you tomorrow it's time to go home
 And steps out the back door alone
 It's a Tuesday night in the middle of June
 She stops by the roadside to gaze at the moon
 Hears up in the distance a whippoorwill cry
 And watches the clouds roll by*

An instrumental break follows verse two giving a chance to complete the pictures in my mind's eye. The secondary vocal tune is again used to get your attention to start verse three, for me a delightfully recognizable scene.

*His textbooks are covered with things that he draws
 While the teacher expounds about natural laws
 He's trying to wipe up all the blue on his hand*

*From the ink of the pen that he
broke
In the last thirty minutes the
words that were said
Never quite seem to make it
inside of his head
So he looks out the window and
lets his dream fly
And watches the clouds roll by*

The lines of each verse rhyme in pairs except the third and fourth lines that break the rhyming pattern as if to say wait, the picture for this verse is not yet complete. At the end of each verse the subject looks skyward "and watches the clouds roll by" making me curious as to why that image is so important it bears repeating.

A soothing instrumental follows until the listener is jolted out of their reverie by a flurry of loud rapid notes that then settles to gently land in A minor for the kicker sung to the secondary vocal tune.

*Nothing remains in this world
forever
We are all just passing by
Sharing our lives for a few
precious moments
Then we move on like the clouds
in the sky*

And there's the Aha! moment. The cloud simile is revealed and I see what the song is about. Each of us is alone, our lives are given meaning by our interactions with others but these precious moments are as fleeting as the clouds in the sky. But there's one final scene in verse four that consolidates this point.

*He brushes the leaves off an old
mossy stone
To spend a few moments with an
old friend alone
Sits down on the stump of an old
cypress tree
And cleans out the bowl of his
pipe
Shadows are rushing through
fields that lie bare
There's so many stories but no
one to share
He takes off his hat looks up to the
sky
And watches the clouds roll by*

A man in a location where friendship was previously shared. The scene is familiar but now he is alone. The precious moments are gone forever leaving me with the

poignant image of a man alone watching the clouds roll by.

A gentle instrumental eases us out and the song ends as it began with a sprinkle of banjo notes. I am no longer the same. The song has transformed me for a moment to a better understanding of life's transitory nature. And that for me is when a song becomes art. ►

John Lafferty lives in Hamilton, Ontario. He is also the owner of "the Beast," a banjo that Jens played for a large portion of his career, and which he used when recording "Carolina in the Fall."

Profile

Who is Harold?

Harold's diner, in some senses, has been the Kruger's home away from home. Listeners to the Carolina Scrapbook, Vol. 1, will also recognize the radio ad that the Krugers created for Harold's, and which aired on local Wilkesboro, NC, radio. The clip was collected on disc 3 of that first scrapbook, which was titled "Scraps."

by Dan Shearer

Little did I know in 2005, when I was early for my first banjo lesson with Jens Kruger in North Wilkesboro and decided to kill some time by driving down the road and grabbing a cup of coffee at the first restaurant I came across, that I would return last month to meet the man who the restaurant was not named after.

Harold Call grew up in Wilkesboro and attended high school and college there while working (from the age of sixteen) at a mirror company, starting at rock bottom – literally, in the rock quarry. Years later, after having worked his way up to foreman, he left the company to work for Kearns Bakery where he was the number one salesman in the state for several years in a row.

But then in 1993, Harold left the bakery and bought Harold's Restaurant from Harold Blankenship – yes, I know what you're thinking. By that time our Harold had been married twenty-three years and was raising two sons, one of them Allen, who has run the restaurant since last year when Harold "retired."



It may not look like too much from the outside (above), but locals know that it's just one of those classic diners where, if you sit long enough, you'll see just about everybody come through the door.

Harold's is not your garden-variety restaurant with several rooms and a hostess. Rather, it's so small – one room, a counter, and some tables and booths – that I almost missed the place when I was looking for coffee. But it is a very friendly place, and as the Kruger Brothers will tell you in person and in a radio advertisement, absolutely the place to go for great, home-cooked meals where almost all the customers are known on a first-name basis.

In 1997, the year of the Kruger's first MerleFest, Robert Shepherd brought Joel, Uwe, and Jens to Harold's for breakfast, and the guys have been going there ever since. Harold recalls how impressed he was with Jens' and Uwe's appreciation of free coffee refills, something they never enjoyed in Europe. Also, according to Harold, during those first few years, "The Krugers could not get enough of the beef served here – so tender and plentiful, unlike the tough and expensive meat served in

Switzerland." And Uwe, who frequented the restaurant almost daily during the years he lived with the Shepherds and still comes by once or twice a week, "taught us how he wanted his food prepared...different varieties with a twist of cheese and eggs. They were likeable people and I got to know them real quick and liked what I saw. I also learned their stories and liked what I heard. They were our kind of people. I've supported and followed them ever since." For Uwe, "Harold's was my surrogate home from 1998 to 2006. I ate there three times a day and must of gained two X's of my size. The food is absolutely delicious. You walk in there; they know exactly what you want. I realized that I evolved into a Southerner when I ordered tea in the middle of a blizzard. As I was sipping the iced tea I realized something was wrong with this picture, because in Switzerland we drink our tea hot.

'It was also the place I met everybody. The mayor would come there, the cops - everybody eats there. If you have a problem you can just go to Harold's and find whoever is in charge.

It's as close a thing to a community center I could find in Wilkesboro - that and the pawnshop. I check in about once a week to have a cup of coffee, just to see everybody, read the newspaper and see if everybody is all right. Harold, his son Allen, and the whole family became part of our own family as well. Harold's is just the place to go.

Harold's also hosts live music, usually on Friday nights - not big productions but more laid-back and informal. The Krugers were frequent performers back in the days before the demands of their busy concert schedule took priority. And after Joel, calling on his well-practiced DJ voice, recorded, "Harold's Restaurant Radio Spot" with Jens playing "Pull That Brake" in the background on the Carolina's Scrapbook Volume I, Disc 3, "Everyone who came to the area from Europe wanted to eat at Harold's," claims Harold proudly.

Harold told me the story about how for two years in a row he purchased the last two raffle tickets at Carolina in the Fall (Harold's catered the festival as well as the more recent Kruger Brothers studio opening) and won a Deering Banjo the first year and a guitar the second. Another story Harold likes to tell is about a good friend of his, Annie Cox, now deceased, who used to drive all the way to Harold's from Surry County, NC just to visit and have a meal. Somewhere along the way Annie befriended the Krugers and invited them to play at her country store in Rockford, NC, which of course they did - more than once. Granted, this is not a news-breaking story; I've included it as an example of the Kruger's generosity, how they so often give of themselves without asking for credit. And as you might have guessed, the Kruger Brothers played at Annie's funeral. ►

Harold's Restaurant is at 1748 Statesville Rd, Highway 115, just north of where that highway intersects with Highway 421. It's in the heart of the fabled moonshine routes that were the mainstay of the liquor trade that gave rise to NASCAR racing.

Venue

The historic Douglass Theatre

The history of the Douglass Theatre is the history of America, one of equal parts of discord and opportunity. Its founder, Charles Douglass, is a classic example of an American: he found a need, and he worked to meet it.

Born the son of a former slave in 1870, Charles Henry Douglass grew up in a one room house built by his father. Working as soon as he was large enough to earn money, he peddled light wood and vegetables in the morning, attended school in the afternoon, and chopped cotton for fifteen cents a day.

In a time of racism and segregation, Douglass saw opportunity in serving the black population of Macon, GA. In 1898 he entered into the bicycle repair and renting business and did well until the automobile craze came. In 1901, Douglass worked as the director of the Georgia Loan and Savings company. There he met his future wife Fannie, who was an assistant cashier.

He became involved in the entertainment industry at the time—this being the height of vaudeville—and organized the Florida Blossom Minstrels and Comedy Company. He also took advantage of TOBA (Theatre Operators Booking Agency)—a network of over 40 theatres—which was the major source of employment for many black performers.

He founded the Douglass Theatre as primarily a vaudeville hall, though one which was open to African-Americans, which was unique for the city at the time. The facility hosted early jazz and blues greats such as Ida Cox, Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey and comedy stars such as Butterbeans and Susie while at the same time running feature-length films and serials popular in theatres throughout the country. During the 1920s the theatre was an important venue for early African-American films written and produced by blacks for black audiences as well. Musical stars such as Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington filled The Douglass

Circular for the Douglass Theatre advertising Macurio's Indian Vaudeville Company with Jack Macurio the "King of the Rifle," Sue Ray, Chief White Eagle, and Wild Horse Harry, and the Watts & Willis Stock Company.

before moving on to the city auditorium in the 1940s.

In 1958, a local DJ Hamp Swain introduced a Saturday morning live broadcast program and talent show called *The Teenage Party* which offered local performers like Otis Redding the opportunity for exposure, and by early 1960s, the theatre became a showcase for new musical talent such as Little Richard and James Brown.

The Douglass closed its doors in 1972 after running for more than fifty-two years. It was dormant for many years before being saved from the wrecking ball in 1990s by a community group which became the non-profit Friends of the Douglass Theatre. It was reopened on January 11, 1997, and is now an historical building run by the city of Macon. ►

The Kruger Brothers play the Douglass Theatre in Macon, GA, on the evening of November 16.

Erata

Ooops ...

In the last newsletter is that I forgot to give photo credit where it was due: **Dave Schmidt** took the photo of the KBs receiving their white hats in Banff, Alberta. Dave, many thanks for the use of that photo. -GH •



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The KBs are heading north for **six dates in Ontario** in late fall. They're in **Kingston** on November 30; **Hamilton** at the Molson Canadian Studio on December 1; they return to the fantastic and fabled Hugh's Room in **Toronto** on December 2; they'll be at **London's** Aeolian Hall on the 3rd, then on to a fundraiser, open to the public, at **Peterborough's** historic Market Hall on December 6. The tour culminates in an evening with the KBs at Canada's National Gallery in **Ottawa** on December 8 (see below). • The KBs have announced the dates for their fall **European tour**: On November 3 a concert will be preceded by a workshop at the Eagle Music Shop in **Huddersfield, England**. Then they head off for three dates in Switzerland: November 8 at the Alte Kaserne in **Zurich**; November 10 at theater(uri) in **Aldorf**; and November 11 at the Alts Schlachtuus in **Laufen**. Drummer Josh Day will be appearing with them for the three Swiss dates. • Uwe has been adding his personal posts to the website. Most recently, in his post "**Cover Art: Behind the Picture**" he tells the story behind some of the photos that have appeared on a number of recent KB album covers. ►

On the Road

November 16, Douglass Theatre,
Macon, GA

November 17, Diana Wortham
Theatre, **Asheville, NC**

November 30, Chalmers Church,
Kingston, ON

December 1, Molson Canadian
Studio at Hamilton Place,
Hamilton, ON

December 2, Hugh's Room,
Toronto, ON

December 3, Aeolian Hall,
London, ON

December 6, Market Hall,
Peterborough, ON

December 8, National Gallery,
Ottawa, ON



On stage for the sound check at BalloonFest. The KBs were the main and final musical talent to be showcased at this year's 39th Carolina BalloonFest in Statesville, NC. Photo by Julianne Macie.

News

Dates set for the 2013 Kruger Brothers Music Academy

The second annual workshop weekend at Double Time Studios in North Wilkesboro, NC, will take place next May 4–6.

by Glen Herbert

This year the Kruger Brothers are holding the second annual academy weekend, in part due to the success of the first, held last May. "It was a wonderful experience," says Jack Fetters, "my only regret was that it ended all too soon."

An intensive weekend of masterclass instruction by the Kruger Brothers at the academy was held on the property of the Double Time Studios in Wilkesboro, NC.

"It was everything I hoped for and more," says Charlie Webb. "As I told the Swiss women making the documentary, this will affect my music making and mental health for the rest of my life."

At the Academy, students are challenged to think about what music is, to think about what music means to them, and to learn how to realize those ideas in their playing. Students will emerge better players, better listeners, and having had an unforgettable experience.

The Academy offers instruction by Uwe, Joel, and Jens, and is open to bass, guitar, and banjo players. While there are breakout sessions for each instrument, students are also encouraged to consider not only their own playing, but also how they can fit within an ensemble setting.

"We arrived on Friday night with excitement and some nervousness about what to expect," wrote Wayne and Cori Merris. "But in true Kruger form, we headed home on Sunday afternoon with a song in our hearts and a greater appreciation for communicating with music." ►

Registration for the 2013 Kruger Brothers Music Academy will begin online in the coming weeks.

Profile

The Deerings

Today they're the first name in American banjos—Bela Fleck, Tony Trischka and many others have used Deering banjos for decades—though something special happened when Greg and Janet met the Kruger Brothers. This is the first in a three-part series.

by Dan Shearer

This is a story about two young people who fell in love – with each other and with the idea of making musical instruments of the highest quality, of building a sustainable business that would last beyond their lifetimes, and of dedication to design and craftsmanship. And finally, it's the story about how fifteen years ago Jens Kruger serendipitously (or maybe not) came into their lives and how he helped guide their dreams into reality.

Greg and Janet Deering grew up in San Diego, California five miles apart from each other. Eighteen-



Some sights from a great annual fall event that took place this past October, BalloonFest in Statesville, NC. Clockwise from top: balloons getting ready for takeoff; Philip and his children Ben and Nora at the board; Joel on stage; friend and fan Kathryn Shearer looking on; Jens and Maynard Holbrook. All photos were taken by Julianne Macie, a wonderful photographer and great friend of the KBs.

year old Greg met fourteen-year-old Janet when Greg, who had agreed to give Janet's older sister a guitar lesson at her home, was met at the door by Janet. Greg, shall we say, registered that meeting. But it was through a local church where for almost four years while he was attending college, Greg served as the youth advisor - preparing and delivering the sermons - that they really got to know each other. After these church meetings Greg and Janet would meet and talk - about how, according to Janet, "We both wanted the same things, to build something to pass on. And we both wanted to be part of a family business. We had entrepreneurial

www.krugerbrothers.com

the next three years working with her dad on renovation projects while learning lots of construction skills.

Greg, on the other hand, learned his craftsmanship, namely the art of building, design, and woodworking, at a much earlier age when, as a two year old, he watched his dad, a fine craftsman and aircraft engineer, build model airplanes, an experience that prepared Greg at age seven to design and build his first model airplane - hand tools only, many of which he still has today.

Then there's the music. Greg played violin and viola all through the early grades and high school. Janet started piano at age five, then guitar ten years later. When Greg was eight years old he heard the Kingston Trio for the first time - on a 45-RPM record. Then at age thirteen, after hearing his best friend Tom play guitar, he "fell in love with the music" and decided to buy a banjo, which he did - a used one - spending a month's pay (\$20) from his paper route so he and Tom could play Kingston Trio songs together. But it wasn't until Greg was sixteen that he actually saw someone playing banjo. Later, Greg bought his first guitar, which he will tell you that, even though his passion and profession is making banjos, he plays better. Playing guitar stuck, and for the last thirty-seven years Greg has been playing guitar with his friend Joe Faletta on banjo.

However, in choosing a career, Greg had to put his love of playing music on a secondary level, because his parents, looking out for his best interests, wanted Greg to become an academic, so he could pursue a more predictably rewarding profession.

So, not unlike many of his peers (and perhaps many of us) Greg, by process of eliminating less interesting majors, became a biology major. But what he really liked was hanging around the Industrial Arts building. (Bear in mind this was 1970 when industrial arts thrived.) One day, Greg took the leap and signed up for a woodshop class, and applying the design and building skills he had carried with him since childhood, built his first banjo, then, you guessed it, changed his major to Industrial Arts. The next semester, he built his first guitar.

In the next issue we'll continue with the "The American Dream Co-Op." ►

The story continues ... watch this space for two more installments of Dan's three-part profile of the Deerings. In the meantime, you might want to check out a very nice video of Jens being interviewed while building a banjo from spare parts at the Deering San Diego factory:

<http://www.krugerbrothers.com/archives/4235>

Venue

KBs to play Canada's National Gallery, Ottawa

For Canada, it's a venue on par with the Smithsonian in D.C. For the world, the building is a treasure designed by Moshe Safdie.

A centerpiece of the national collections in Ottawa, ON, Canada's capital, the gallery also hosts a range of concerts and events. And on December 8, it will host an evening with the Kruger Brothers.

Canada's National Gallery is one of the foremost galleries in North America, and is home to the most extensive collection of Canadian and international art in Canada.

And in many ways the building itself is a Canadian national treasure. Overlooking the parliament buildings, it was designed by Israeli/Canadian Moshe Safdie. His other projects include the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, MA, the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC, and the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum in Jerusalem, Israel. ►

For ticketing and event information see ticketweb.com or email me at glenherbert@sympatico.ca.



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbrothers.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

In this issue, we continue a three-part **profile of Greg and Janet Deering** of the Deering Banjo company. Last month Dan Shearer wrote about the early life of the duo that would become the first couple of American fretted instruments. This month we look at an important decade in their lives, one which took them from enthusiasts to founders of Deering Banjo. • The KBs are **back from Europe** where they played some sold out shows in Switzerland as well as a date in the UK. • This month begins with a nice **tour of Ontario**, which has grown from two nights to six, including a stop at Canada's National Gallery in Ottawa, the nation's capital. ►



The Kontras Quartet, from left to right: Dmitri Pogorelov, Ai Ishida, Jean Hatmaker, and Francois Henkins. The quartet recently took part in a production of the Appalachian Concerto in Newton, NC.

On the Road

December 1, Molson Canadian Studio at Hamilton Place, **Hamilton, ON**

December 2, Hugh's Room, **Toronto, ON**

December 3, Aeolian Hall, **London, ON**

December 6, Market Hall, **Peterborough, ON**

December 8, National Gallery, **Ottawa, ON**

December 15, Madison County Arts Center, **Marshall, NC**

January 18, Carolina Theater, **Durham, NC**

January 19, Thalian Hall for the Performing Arts, **Wilmington, NC**

January 31, South Florida Community College, **Avon Park, FL**

February 1-4, Mountain Songs at Sea, **Miami, FL**

February 4, Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival, **Amelia Island, FL**

February 24, Winter Village Bluegrass, **Ithaca, NY**

March 8, Yadkin Cultural Arts Center, **Yadkinville, NC**

News

Combining forces with the Kontras Quartet

When the Kruger Brothers perform with the Kontras Quartet, it's like the United Nations—it involves citizens of six different countries. Still, it's less about the "nations," and more about "united."

by Dan Shearer

"I feel like we're pulling on the same rope," says Jens metaphorically when asked to sum up his relationship, both musically and personally, with the members of the Kontras Quartet.

Until this October in Newton, NC, all of the string quartets with whom the Kruger Brothers have performed the Appalachian Concerto have been individual musicians who formed ensembles specifically to play with the Krugers. One example is the instructors at the NC School of the Arts who participated in the

premiere of the concerto and are featured on the concerto CD; another example, selected student musicians in the summer residence program at the Eastern Music Festival in Greensboro. But the Kontras Quartet are an established group; they are former members of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and are currently in the third year of its tenure as the Hickory Metro Resident Quartet with the Western Piedmont Symphony in Hickory, NC. The quartet is comprised of Dmitri Pogorelov from Russia on first violin, Francois Henkins from South Africa on second violin, Ai Ishida from Japan on viola, and Jean Hatmaker from Illinois on cello.

"We're all musicians from four parts of the world ... four countries," observes Francois, who seems to serve as unofficial spokesperson for the group, "but we all somehow got together in Chicago while we were playing in the civic orchestra. We enjoyed each other's company and enjoyed playing together. As fate would have it, soon after we formed the

quartet, this position opened up in Hickory, and after competing with several other groups we were offered the tenure. It's been an incredible experience, but the fact that we got together in Chicago was a stroke of luck.

"When we came down here we were just struck with the warmth of the people. What big support for the fine arts they have here," exclaims Francois with pride.

"As far as the quartet program, classical people know about it – actually, the locals now refer to 'the' string quartet as 'our' string quartet. In the chamber music world, Hickory is on the map." And Jean adds, "The community may be small but it's mighty."

Francois continues, "In August 2011, Reggie Helton, now Executive Director of our symphony, swung the idea of playing with the Kruger Brothers by us. Then in November at the Arts Market in Durham, NC where the Krugers and we were playing (but not together) Reggie introduced us to Joel, who was manning the merchandise booth at

the time," remembers Francois. "Reggie had this grand vision to bring the Kruger Brothers to the auditorium (in Newton). We did a little research, fell in love with them and now have their bumper stickers."

The first time the quartet played with the Kruger Brothers was at the Krugers' studio where they rehearsed in March 2012. "We think this was kind of a test drive," suspects the group in good humor. Their next rehearsal was seven months later in October of this year. Uwe said he wanted the music to "stew in our brains a little bit," remembers Francois.

Talking about the performance of the Appalachian Concerto in Newton, Jean observes, "No matter where the audience members came from they came away unanimously having appreciated the experience, which was really cool, because you had people sitting next to each other who were avid bluegrass fans and avid classical fans, and maybe had they met each other outside the circumstances, they wouldn't necessarily have bonded over that. But now, that connection we made with the Kruger Brothers on stage went out to other people. They have something in common they didn't know before."

What's in the future for the Kontras and the Krugers? First a concert in Durham, NC in January, then on to Wilmington, NC the next evening, then Palm Beach, Florida in mid-April, and finally MerleFest at the end of April as Jens recently confirmed, noting that they're playing the concerto on the Watson Stage on Sunday of the four-day festival.

And if Ai has her way, someday they'll also be on stage together in Japan. ►

Kontras—which means "contrasts" in Afrikaans, the native language of violinist Francois Henkens—debuted in Chicago after the four musicians met while performing in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. The quartet's members hold graduate degrees in performance from DePaul University, Indiana University, the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, and the Chicago College of Performing Arts. For more information on the Kontras Quartet, as well as a listing of upcoming performances, visit their website at www.kontrasquartet.com

www.krugerbros.com

Profile

The Deerings and the American Dream

It's one of the great stories in the history of fretted instrument building in the US: In 1970 Sam Radding began a small manufacturing shop to serve a local community of musicians in the greater San Diego area. Small, unassuming, not a little bit rag-tag, it was run like no other shop had been before, or likely would since. And, in just four years, it left a legacy like none other as well.

by Glen Herbert

"It was like co-op," recalls Sam Radding of the American Dream Musical Instrument Manufacturing Company, a grand name for what was a small and very fluid organization.

"Everybody set their time. and put their effort into it. It was Just a group of people who were equally interested in building and repairing instruments. And we just tried to make it work."

Radding's hiring practice was simple, and perhaps emblematic of the time. "If you want to work here, that was enough for me! And we picked up a very interesting collection of people."

The aspect of the shop that Radding feels was most unique was that kind of open-minded approach to people and ideas coupled with a culture of learning, growing, and sharing. He says, "I left hopefully, even back then, a small legacy of ways of thinking about what you're doing. This thing about sharing information. I honestly believed that sharing information about building something, it's what one has to do if they have that information."

"I could never understand why anybody would look me in the eye and say 'I can't tell you what that glue is.' You know, you might use that glue and do a better job than I do. And I've always felt that if someone can do a better job than I do, then they should be doing the job. And there was the knowledge that, you know, you may have to scrape and scratch, but you can make a living building something."

By his own admission, in his book *Guitar Lessons*, when Bob Taylor started working at American Dream he was just 18

years old and "didn't have any of the necessary skills." Taylor had been building guitars as a hobbyist and approached Radding to buy supplies, such as fret wire and abalone for inlay. He brought guitars around for "show and tell" and otherwise just hung around, simply to be near like-minded people.

Soon he pestered Radding into letting him have a bench in the shop in order to do repairs to clients' guitars, and soon he was rubbing shoulders with a roomful of others who gained in enthusiasm and dedication whatever they lacked in skill, including Geoff Stelling, Kurt Listig, and later Kim Breedlove, Larry Breedlove, and James Goodall. All with the same perspective and the same dedication to what Radding was trying to do.

One of the builders who had been there virtually from the start was Greg Deering, who was often tasked with training those new to the shop. But, even for him, the initial impulse was fairly basic. In an interview with David Holt in 1988 Deering said of his initial interest in the shop, "I wanted a better banjo and couldn't afford it, so I built one. Then another one and another one, and the next thing you know I was doing it for a living."

While the shop was short lived, it's easy to see that the lessons learned there have carried on long since, including that desire to share ideas. Geoff Stelling and Greg Deering worked together on the first instruments in the Stelling line. When Bob Taylor and Kurt Listig bought the shop in 1974, they transformed it into Taylor Guitar. Larry Breedlove and Bob Taylor worked together on many of the technological aspects that make Taylor guitars unique today.

Greg and Janet remained within that community of builders, and Greg worked for a time at Taylor, ultimately founding Deering Banjos in 1977. Working out of their home, Greg and Janet made their first Deering model to have "Deering" on the headstock: an intermediate model with a steel drum. Their next model was a basic one with a lightweight rim, a precursor to the extremely popular Goodtime Banjo which they would premiere in 1996.

The business grew and in 1978 they moved to a shop in Lemon

Grove and hired seven employees, using hiring practices that were not unlike those at American Dream. Deering noted that, for him, skill was less important than commitment. In 1979 Chuck Neitzel was hired away from his job as a house painter after Greg saw him in action painting his banjo teacher's house. He's been with them ever since. Joe Falletta was an electronics engineer. Many other long-time employees began, literally, sweeping the floors.

"It's really surprising how much you learn about somebody when their job is to sweep the floor," said Deering. "When you don't have to keep pushing him, and you don't have to keep pointing to what he didn't do, you know you've got a competent individual. And that's what we look for more than anything, people who are just competent individuals. If they really care about what they do and are conscientious, then you can train them to do anything and they'll learn. But if they don't care, you can't train that into somebody."

Those values remained as the company grew, later acquiring one of the most famed brands of banjo, the Vega Banjo Company. It was the company that built the instruments that were used in the folk boom of the 60s and which created for Pete Seeger his iconic long-neck banjo. Greg jokes that he had always wanted a Seeger long-neck banjo, though to get one he ultimately had to buy the company and build one himself.

While the American Dream Musical Instruments Company is now long gone, it's ripples are still being felt throughout the musical instrument industry and can be seen on the headstocks of guitar shops from coast to coast: Breedlove, Taylor, Stelling, Goodall, and Deering.

These days, Deering has an impressive legacy of it's own. John McEuen of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band has said, "The Deerings have a mission that I'm totally behind. They want to change the world five strings at a time, and I think they're doing it." ►

In our next issue, the Deerings meet Jens Kruger and form a decades long partnership that has proven to be as important for Deering Banjo as it has been for the Kruger Brothers.

First Person Singular**Q&A with the Kontras Quartet**

by Dan Shearer

Q: What is it like to rehearse and perform with them? Did you find any common ground?



A: Ai Ishida: "They are very thoughtful people, not only about music but I feel that they're really caring. You can just feel it when you play music together; when you have lunch together. It's really interesting, because we play as a group every day for the last three of four years, and they've played for thirty years. That's why we can understand. There's an understanding between both groups."

Q: What is your impression of the Kruger Brothers and of their music?



A: Francois Henkins: "I love their rich personalities. It's awesome how diverse their backgrounds are. Because we're from everywhere we really feel we can connect with them. Given the piece was written as an immigration theme, we all feel we can connect to that. And when Jens was talking with Ai about composing for a string quartet, with the preconceived stereotypes we have about bluegrass musicians you don't expect a banjo player to talk to you about the viola part in Schumann's string quartet. It blew me away about how much this guy knew and how curious he is to know about everything. In our concert he made

the comment that when people tend to think about musicians we put ourselves in a box. In the end it comes down to playing good music or bad music, which is what he said from stage. I think it is one hundred percent true; we honestly do not care what we play as long as we feel enriched and we can enrich people around us by playing it. If it's good music, it's good music. And that's why they're good musicians, because they know about life - curious about all aspects of life, not just music."

Q: What are your impressions of the Appalachian Concerto, now that you've rehearsed it and performed it on stage?



A: Dmitri Pogorelov: "The concerto is incredibly well written, and writing for a quartet isn't easy, doing it in a way that there is a musical conversation among the four of us and a conversation with the band. It takes musical vision and great execution skills, understanding of instruments, of just how things can be put together to come up with a piece of music like the Appalachian Concerto. It gives you enough musical material to think about for years. So many beautiful musical moments there that appeal to just about everyone."

And Uwe has this incredible story telling talent; whatever he sings really touches you, but you need to pay attention. You need to listen to it. And Joel is an incredible bass player, just incredible. He can really play bass. I know; I'm a rock and roll fan.

What we do that is part of the classical music experience is that when you come to listen to music you're not just there for the show. And I think this is what we have in common (with the Krugers). When these two energies sort of get together, although our audiences come from two different directions, the idea is the same; you come to hear the concert. When the concert is good, when the music is right, and the warmth is there, it's extraordinary Good music has

an effect on people. And it's inspirational to us as well that they've been doing this for so long, and you still see this excitement and warmth, an appreciation for their own music and willingness to learn about other people's music."

Q: What was it like working with the Kontras Quartet?

Jens: "They are one of the best string quartets we're working with. I feel like Dmitri really is a fabulous musician. He's from Russia, and more typical of the East Block, there's this sort of longing, a sentiment, especially with classical music that I feel very related to. When I play music and I put my soul into the music, it feels like he understands completely where I'm going. We don't have to talk about where we want to go with the music."

When we get together it's not about the notes, because they go home and practice and really know the notes; it's only about *how* we're going to play; *how* we hear it. ... They know that every performance is going to be different, and that we always have to be on our toes to find each other. And that really takes a different caliber of musicianship.

To have musicians who really interpret it together as a group, that really makes an indescribable joy. I cannot express enough how much I enjoy the enthusiasm, the technical skill, and especially the musical awareness - the alertness and the willingness to actually create good music which is not ego, that willingness to pull on the same rope, to bring the music to a different level. I can't wait to do much more with them."

Uwe: "The Kontras are a team; they are a band just like us. They live together, they eat together, they rehearse together. You can just throw anything at them and they can at least give it a try. Just like us in a way. They're different than most quartets we play with, because most quartets have a leader and he or she decides what they're going to do, and then you deal with that person. With them (*the Kontras*) you deal with all of them. Joel and I work with them just as much as Jens does. We really perform as a septet which makes a much more collaborative effort, and they're all incredible

musicians. We share the immigration experience. There is so much we can share and learn from each other; this is a real collaboration. We're going to have a good future with them."

Q: What's it like working with the Kruger Brothers?



A: Jean Hatmaker: "I really felt so much warmth coming from them and so much encouragement. These are people who are not only professional musicians but are so passionate and clear about what they want to accomplish with their music. There's so much love for what they do that it's infectious. It's impossible not to get excited when you're working with them."

I think so much about how well the concerto is done stems from a really humble curiosity on Jens' part. For instance, on the day of the show, he was talking about writing for cello, wanting to learn about the instruments, what is possible and what isn't possible. He told me he'd never really held a cello before. (He has now, and I've got photos of it.) For someone who's so creative and so talented he still always wants to know more and do more with more information. I was really struck by that, and it's obvious he takes that intelligence into his composing; he is really thoughtful about how he writes."

Even though they've worked together for so long they're still so warm towards each other, and they're still so invested in what they're doing and believe in what they're doing in spite of the fact that they've been doing it for so long. It can be a wonderfully rewarding experience even after decades." ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

Happy New Year! We hope that you had a great holiday season, and send best wishes for 2013. • It's with great sadness that we learned of the passing of **Rosa Lee Watson**, who died on Thanksgiving Day at the age of 81. The wife of Doc Watson, Doc and Rosa Lee spent a lifetime together, having first met at the time when Doc was playing for spare change in front of the courthouse in Lenoir, NC. Anyone who ever saw Doc perform will be aware of Rosa Lee, as he mentioned her frequently from stage and remembered her in countless interviews and press conferences. In his last press conference prior to Music Fest n' Sugar Grove he said, "To me entertainment is a pleasure, but ... when I started out, my main motive was to earn a living for a sweet little woman and two children. And they were both young then, and every time I got a good concert done and made a little extra money it pleased me." ►



Doc and Rosa Lee Watson.

On the Road

January 18, Carolina Theatre, Durham, NC
 January 19, Thalian Hall for the Performing Arts, Wilmington, NC
 January 31, South Florida Community College, Avon Park, FL
 February 1-4, Mountain Songs at Sea, Miami, FL
 February 4, Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival, Amelia Island, FL
 February 24, Winter Village Bluegrass, Ithaca, NY
 March 8, Yadkin Cultural Arts Center, Yadkinville, NC
New dates have been added to the schedule in March in Arizona, Colorado, South Carolina, and North Carolina. For a full listing see
<http://www.krugerbrothers.com/concerts>

News

Looking back at 2012 ...

All told, it was a very good year.

by Glen Herbert

This is the time of year that we tend to look back on the year, perhaps a bit wistfully, perhaps with a sense of regret, or perhaps with a sense of good riddance. 2012, as any year, brought some sadness, but it also brought many great new partnerships, new friends, and lots of great music.

Saying goodbye

Last year we said goodbye to two abiding musical heroes: **Earl Scruggs** passed away in March, and **Doc Watson** passed away in May. Doc was soon joined by his wife, **Rosa Lee Watson**, who passed away at Thanksgiving. The Watsons, especially, offered an unwavering support, inspiration, and friendship to the Kruger Brothers. They will be dearly missed.

New partnerships

In January, the KBs teamed up with the **Imagine Ballet Theater and Weber State University Chamber Orchestra** to present what was billed as a "night to remember." Selections from Music from the Spring and "Appalachian Concerto" were choreographed and presented in Ogden Utah.

Last year the KBs were invited to complete a residency at the **Banff Centre for the Arts** in Alberta, Canada. In August they worked with young classical musicians from across Canada, culminating in the world premiere of Jens Kruger's new composition, "**Spirit of the Rockies**."

When they arrived in Alberta, the KBs were feted by the city of Calgary with a White Hat ceremony—they received the white cowboy hats that are emblematic of the province of Alberta. The white Smithbilt hat has been bestowed on numerous celebrities and dignitaries on their visits to Calgary, most notably to royals Prince William and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge

during their visit to the Calgary Stampede in 2011.

Then in November, the KBs joined forces with the **Kontras Quartet** for a presentation of Appalachian Concerto, a meeting of both minds and music. Keep your eyes peeled for upcoming dates with Kontras.

And, especially of note, the first annual **Kruger Brothers Music Academy** was held in May. There they made some great new friendships and began an annual academy that will be a highlight of the years to come. The 2013 academy will be held on May 3-5 (see page 2).

New music

In addition to the premier of the new work, "Spirit of the Rockies" the KBs also released **The Best of the Kruger Brothers**, a CD featuring highlights of their career as well as a new recording of a studio version of "People Get Ready."

In April, Steve Spurgin released a new album, **Folk Remedies**, which included a beautiful and quite different version of the Krugers'



Joel and Glen Herbert, the editor of this newsletter, on a hill overlooking Merlefest on the first morning of the festival. We were there to do a live feed—music and interview—for a local television station. Uwe took this picture, and you can see Riley Baugus being interviewed in the background.

Carolina in the Fall. It was a really thoughtful addition to what is a very beautiful and compelling CD.

In the pinch-me category, the **Kingston Trio** released a version of “Forever and a Day” on their recent CD, *Born at the Right Time*. When Jens, Uwe, and Joel were growing up, and growing into a sense of themselves as musicians, the Kingston Trio was impossible to overlook.

To then have the Trio record one of their songs is a very nice “full-circle” kind of event. (And as Dan Shearer reported in his profile of Greg Deering, it was the Kingston Trio that to some extent turned him onto banjo. When Greg was eight years old he heard the Kingston Trio for the first time—on a 45-RPM record—and “fell in love with the music” deciding soon after to buy a banjo.)

The Krugers returned to lots of favourite venues this year, including Merlefest, Hugh’s Room, Silver Dollar City, and the gorgeous Stoughton Opera House in Stoughton, WI.

They also played quite a few new places, making quite a splash whenever they did. In Canada, they played in Kingston, Ontario, as part of the **Live Wire** music series to a crowd that was—despite it being the first KB show for many of them—very vocally enthusiastic.

The KBs were also the darlings of the **Goderich Celtic Roots Festival** in Goderich, Ontario. As

with the event in Kingston, for many in the crowd it was their first experience of the Kruger Brothers.

I know someday ...

For the Kruger Brothers, though, as they’ve said countless times from the stage or in conversation with fans, there is a sense of being blessed with the opportunity to make music for such wonderful and caring people. The world is full of different kinds of people, as we’re reminded all too often, but there’s something about being at a KB concert that just feels like, at least for the moment, you really did find your way to the right room.

So, many thanks again for your support and your friendship. ►

News

Looking ahead to 2013

Music Academy, May 3-5

We’re particularly looking forward to hosting another Academy weekend. Open to all, the weekend is a chance to immerse oneself in music.

The program is designed for players at any level who are ready for the next step in their musical exploration. Instruction will be given in banjo, guitar, and bass technique. Classes will allow

students to explore new musical ideas, learn new techniques, and to work with others to develop their overall musicianship. Classes are augmented by masterclass instruction, including commented performance and guided jam sessions.

“Our aim for the academy,” says Jens, “is to have a place where people can come and really talk about music. Whether that’s over lunch, in the classroom, during a jam ... the music comes first.” It intends to be very different opportunity than you may have experienced through other music camps and workshops. “People learn music because something grabs them, but it can be hard to find what it is,” says Jens. “It’s more than just what picks you use or where you put your fingers ... for me as a child what was amazing was not how music works, but why.”

Students meet together each day both as a single group, but also in break out groups dedicated to specific instruments. Students are free to attend any session no matter what their main instrument may be; if you’re a banjo player and would like to learn what the bass players are thinking about, then the academy can provide that opportunity and then some.



Mountain Songs at Sea, February 1-4

Mountain Song Productions and the Steep Canyon Rangers are partnering with Sixthman to fill an entire luxury cruise liner with more than a dozen bluegrass, folk, and acoustic artists, including the Kruger Brothers. It’s the biggest ever festival at sea.

There’s something special that happens when a group of artists who share a passion for their music and a community of like-minded fans gather together to journey aboard one ship. Mountain Song at

Sea will provide experiences that you can’t get anywhere else – shows in intimate venues, spontaneous artist collaborations, jams, interactions with artists and through it all the creation of friendships and your own Mountain Song at Sea community. Artists will host Q&A sessions and other activities, like a poker tournament with Steep Canyon Rangers, beer and wine tasting, workshops, games, and more. ►

Memories

Remembering Skip Vetter

He described himself jokingly as a groupie, though he was a lot more than that.

We were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of a great, great friend of the Kruger Brothers, Skip Vetter. He had been diagnosed with a very aggressive form of cancer five years ago, though we were lucky to have so much good, quality time with him since then.

Skip regularly traveled with the Kruger Brothers, including trips to Europe and Canada, the most recent being last summer to attend the premiere of “The Spirit of the Rockies.” (We also profiled Skip in this newsletter in August of 2011.)

He was a veteran of Vietnam, he photographed wildlife, painted, toured the eastern seaboard in his RV. He was a father, a husband, a dog owner, train spotter, wood carver. He painted birds, including the ones on the covers of the two *Carolina Scrapbook Vol. 2* disks. We have used his photographs many times in the pages of this newsletter, so while you may not have been aware of it, close readers will be familiar with some of his work.

On his Flickr photo page, he listed his occupation as “trying to make the most of every day.” Indeed, he was an inspiration in that regard. Skip will be dearly missed, especially by his loving wife Charlotte. ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The Kruger Brothers will be appearing at the Lincoln Theatre in Marion, VA, on March 2 for a taping of an episode of the radio and television show **Song of the Mountains**. The program showcases the best talents in bluegrass and old-time music from the heart of the region where it all began. Live concerts are held monthly at the Lincoln Theatre with shows videotaped for an award-winning television series which can be seen on public television affiliates throughout the country. It currently airs on 180 PBS stations, so check your listings. For more information about the show or the concert series, see the Song of the Mountains website at songofthemountains.org • The KBs are just back from **NAMM**, the annual trend-setting industry trade show in Anaheim, CA. There they performed on a number of different stages, and also attended the Deering Banjos booth. • The guys begin this month with a first for them: a floating music festival. The **Mountain Song at Sea** cruise departs Ft Lauderdale, FL, on the 1st, returning on the 5th. With them on the cruise is David Grisman, the Del McCoury Band, the Punch Brothers, Peter Rowan, Tim O'Brian and Brian Sutton, and Steep Canyon Rangers. ►



Kruger Brothers Music Academy banjo session, 2012.

Photos courtesy Julianne Macie.

News

Academy countdown

The second annual academy weekend will see a host of returning participants, and lot of new faces as well.

It's full steam ahead toward what promises to be a great Kruger Brothers Academy weekend. Spots are filling up, and we're just about at capacity, but a few spaces still remain on a first-come basis.

The academy includes full groups sessions as well as breakout workshops for guitar, banjo, and bass, each lead by Uwe, Jens, and Joel respectively. Meals are also included with registration.

The academy takes place May 3-5 at Double Time Studios in North Wilkesboro, NC. To register, visit the website page at krugerbros.com/academy or call Christine at the office at 336-667-2800. ►

Profile

The beginning of a beautiful friendship

When Jens met the Deerings, it was good for everyone involved, including thousands of banjo players who literally hold some of the fruits of that relationship in the palms of their hands.

by Dan Shearer

If you know the story of the Kruger Brothers' migration to the United States, you know how significant the 1997 MerleFest was for them. It was their first MerleFest and their big break in America. It provided the setting and the opportunity for many, now historical, introductions to people who became significant in the Krugers' personal and musical lives. The Deerings are no exception.

You might imagine the scene at that MerleFest when the Janet and Greg Deering sat down for dinner



On the Road

February 1-4, Mountain Song at Sea, Miami, FL

February 4, Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival, Amelia Island, FL

February 24, Winter Village Music, Ithaca, NY

March 8, Yadkin Cultural Arts Center, Yadkinville, NC

April 5-6, Common Ground on the Hill, Westminster, MD

April 14, Society of the Four Arts, Palm Beach, FL

April 25-28, Merlefest, Wilkesboro, NC

and Jens Kruger approached Greg and said, "You're the guy who builds Deering Banjos," then, according to Greg, proceeded to "cross examine me about banjos." That's how it all started, and before Jens left that day the Deerings gave him a Goodtime banjo with "no strings attached."

Building a better banjo

A year later, at an IBMA (International Bluegrass Music Association) event, Janet was working behind a Deering booth right next to the Gibson booth. Jens had agreed to be on hand as consulting musician for Gibson, but the Gibson rep stood him up. So, over dinner, Jens and Janet got to talking and soon found themselves discussing a business collaboration.

"Even back then Jens knew exactly what he wanted (in a banjo). We started working with him immediately and never looked back," recalls Janet. "And it had a positive effect on our business." But just as important to Jens and Janet and Greg is the close personal friendship they have developed over the years working side by side.

Then in 2000, Greg and Janet visited the Krugers in Switzerland. During their visit and in response to Jens' need for a work permit which would allow him to come to the States, the Deerings offered him a job. However, Jens wasn't able to accept the offer at the time; he remembers that it was in November 2002 when he called Janet and reminded her of the offer. Janet and Greg immediately put him on a Deering Company team that was assigned to Research and Development. "And that's been our (business) relationship ever since, says Janet, "Although actually, Jens is really more like a consultant."

When I consider the word "consultant" I picture an advice-giver operating in the background. Well, nothing could be further from the role Jens plays at Deering. From the beginning he was hands-on. Starting in December 2003, when he and his family moved to America, Jens worked with the Deerings on every aspect of the banjo, most notably the tone ring which Jens had produced by "trial and error" at a foundry in Switzerland, aiming for a perfect resonance produced by various proportions of tin and bronze, and

as Greg says, "searching for a tone ring that doesn't fight itself." But there's much more. When Jens describes the parts of the banjo that he helped design and improve at Deering, there is not a single piece—be it metal, wood, plastic (in the case of the Remo heads), or the lacquer, the strings, the picks, the cases, and most recently the pickup system—that hasn't received his focused attention, always searching for sources of for the very best materials and the best way to use them in service of tone, volume, and projection.

When Jens visits the Deering Company in California, which he does frequently, he doesn't settle for sitting in a design room sketching; he always goes to the production floor where he says, "I look at how the people put the banjos together, helping them to put the pieces on the right spot, where they fit best and how tight the pieces need to be—all details that make a banjo" the best that it can be.

The banjos Jens helped develop with the Deerings began with the Saratoga in the Tenbrooks series, built in 2003, and what Jens refers to as, "the first big step toward a professional banjo" and an immediate favorite of Bella Fleck and Tony Trischka.

Later, he worked on improving the Goodtime, which the Deerings designed and built in 1996, and more recently in 2010 the Eagle, (named in honor of Greg Deering, Eagle Scout and Scoutmaster for twenty-five years), a banjo which, according to Jens, took some time to build and price in order to compete with the foreign markets which were producing cheaper banjos with inferior materials.

Adventures in nylon

Most recently—always thinking outside the box—Jens has been working on the nylon string banjo, "because I believe the nylon string has a very big future because it sounds very pleasant, you don't need finger picks to play it, and it's very soothing to actually play."

To prevent the sound of the nylon string banjo from "dying off" as Jens puts it, Jens has developed a patent pending "little piece of wood" similar to a guitar bridge plate, one that fits underneath the banjo head directly under where the actual bridge is placed.

With Greg concentrating on design and inlay artwork and building the machines to build banjos, Janet focusing on marketing and sales, and Jens "consulting," Deering has produced more than eighty thousand banjos since they started the company back in the days of the American Dream. They are at the top of their game, making some of the most sought after banjos in the world. ►

Memories

Making the most of every day

Skip Vetter was a very dear friend of the Kruger Brothers, one who offered his talents to a number of their projects, including the cover art for the second volume of the Carolina Scrapbook. More so, he was a friend and ardent supporter. In early January Skip passed away from the complications of cancer.

by Glen Herbert

Skip was a lot of things to a lot of people, but here's one thing of which many of us were unaware: he designed clocks. "That's where I make my money," he once said to a local reporter. "Cheap, low-end clocks, the kind you see in Wal-Mart."

One of them was a 10-inch wall clock, with a green plastic frame, a white face and black numbers. "It's just a cheap clock. At the last count they had sold 19 million of them," he said, lamenting that he wasn't paid through royalties. "Just a penny a clock would have done it," he said. "That would have been the last clock. But they already know that, apparently."

In addition to the clocks, Skip was a veteran of Vietnam, he photographed wildlife, painted, and toured the eastern seaboard in his RV. He was a father, a husband, a dog owner, train spotter, wood carver. He painted birds, including the ones on the covers of the two *Carolina Scrapbook* Vol. 2. And most importantly, he was a friend. Each year I arrived at Merlefest to see that he was already in residence in the campsite that a number of us shared, awning out, sitting under a plastic, rope-lite palm tree.

For five years he also survived cancer quite spectacularly, not just because his treatments were so effective—his cancer was a devastating one, in which a survival of just one year post diagnosis was beating the odds—but because he kept on doggedly living his life. Not just breathing, but really living. He was always there at Merlefest, though some years not feeling so great; he also toured with the Kruger Brothers, most recently to Banff for the premiere of "The Spirit of the Rockies" in August of 2012.

His photography continued, something that he loved, and his last post to his Flickr site (he made more than 1000 posts, all of which are worth a look) was a photo of a spider he found on a holly bush in his backyard. The date of the post is December 12, and the photo was taken after he had already spent time in hospice.

He simply refused to stop living, seeing friends, attending Kruger Brothers shows, spending time with family, no matter what the scans might have showed. For Joel's wedding he took out boat tours for the guests, this at a time when he had just come off yet another round of chemo. Likewise, he attended the first Kruger Brothers Music Academy in 2012, enrolled as a bass student, right in the midst of one therapy or another. He wanted to be there, no matter how much he disparaged his bass playing, so he ponied up and went.

I don't mean to suggest that he was a hero. If he was, he was a hero in the way that all of us try to be: we try to meet the challenges of life not because we choose to, but precisely because we have no choice. While we're here, we try to give a little back, to do some good, to have some fun, and to spend some time with family and friends. And that's exactly what Skip did. ►

A celebration of the life of Philip "Skip" Vetter will take place in Carthage, NC, at 2:00 PM Saturday, March 9th at the Carthage Community Building (Old Town Hall).



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The Kruger Brothers will be appearing at the Lincoln Theatre in Marion, VA, on March 2 for a taping of an episode of the radio and television show **Song of the Mountains**. There are still a few seats left, so if you are in the area, it will no doubt be a very special and dynamic performance. For details see songofthemountains.org

• There are one or two spots still open for the Kruger Brothers Music Academy, so ... if you're still sitting on the fence regarding plans to attend, you're fast approaching the now-or-never moment. For info or to register, see the Academy page of the website or call Christine at the office at 336-667-2800. • The first place that the Kruger Brothers played in Canada was at **Camp Wanakita** in central Ontario, and there remains a strong connection to the camp to this day. As the camp approaches its 60th anniversary next summer, stories and recollections have been posted to an anniversary blog at <http://wanakita60th.com/>.

Included there is a song, "Wanakita" which was recorded in the Kruger Brother's studio in 2004, and which features some instrumentation that, to Kruger fans, might sound a touch familiar ... See the post titled "Wanakita Song." That song was also written and performed by Glen Herbert, who is profiled by Dan Shearer in this issue of the newsletter (see p. 2)►



www.krugerbros.com



Glen Herbert, who is profiled on page two, at Koshlong Lake in central Ontario.

News

Benefit for Community Care

The Kruger Brothers are delighted to be supporting an important community initiative with their music. On March 3 they'll be playing at the Watauga High School Auditorium in Boone, NC, in order to benefit the Community Care Clinic.

Tickets for the show are available at the Mast General Store in Boone or at the Community Care Clinic at 141 Health Center Drive, Boone. The concert is a matinee, with doors opening at 2:30 for the 3:30 show.

The Community Care Clinic was established in 2006, in response to a growing number of uninsured in our community. Nearly 10,000 adults in Watauga County do not have health insurance. Through disease prevention, continuity of care and active follow-up, the clinic works to promote the health and well-being of the community it serves. It's a great cause, one worth supporting. ►

New music

Two new CDs set for spring release

It's been a while since a recording of new music for the Krugers, though this spring will no doubt have made it worth the wait.

Two discs, both to be launched at Merlefest at the end of April, represent the two poles of Kruger music.

A live recording—the first for the KBs—will present **"The Spirit of the Rockies"** as performed at the premiere of that piece at the Banff Centre in August of last year. It's a symphonic work, big in it's sound and arrangement, though expansive as well in the narrative arc that it traces. The hour-long piece presents a reminiscence, of sorts, of a man who traveled to the Rockies at the turn of the last century, an event that changed his life, who he was, and even the world that he lived in.

Also being prepared for release is a **tribute to Doc Watson**, a collection of songs that came to the

Kruger Brothers through Doc, some of which they have been playing since they were teens. Jens describes the collection as a tribute, but also a chance to revisit some favorite songs that have informed the Kruger Brothers song book, in one way or another, for the past thirty years.

For further information on both releases, check back to the blog on the Kruger website, where we'll post details and pre-order information in early April. ►

Essay

John Cleese on creativity

Could we do what the Kruger Brothers do?

by John Lafferty

I would guess that many Kruger Brothers fans, while marveling at the virtuosity of this talented trio, are also appreciative of the level of creativity it takes to produce such extraordinarily original music. Likewise, I suspect many of us assume that we don't have the requisite talent to be that creative.

Maybe not, but recently I found a YouTube video of the comedian John Cleese giving a serious talk on creativity (Google 'John Cleese on Creativity') that's made me look at this subject in a more objective way.

Cleese has been studying creativity for 25 years and while he can't explain what it is, he does describe what it isn't. The good news is that it's not related to IQ and it isn't a talent. Rather, it is a way of operating and creating the right circumstances to allow natural creativity to shine through.

Cleese defines two mechanisms of operating, what he terms the "closed mode" and the "open mode." The closed mode is what we utilize to get things done; we are active, tense, and impatient, with little time for humor as we're on a timeline and we've got to stay on track. In this mode we might be effective but we can't be creative.

Rather, according to Cleese, creativity requires the open mode, that time when where we're relaxed, expansive, playful and open to humor. In this mode our curiosity can function, making us open to creativity. The problem is that most people and organizations spend most of their time in the closed mode and thus fail to tap into their own creativity potential.

Cleese describes a five step method for operating in the open mode. I'll use the example of me writing a song, something I would like to do but have never been able to manage. Always comes out as complete drivel.

Create an oasis of space, i.e., seal myself off from the outside world in a secure space free from interruptions.

Create an oasis of time, time to relax and get the closed mode issues out of my mind. Things like I've got to call Jim and the kids need dental appointments, etc. Cleese recommends sticking to this for 30 minutes to fully get in the playful mode and once there allowing a further 60 minutes for the creativity to happen.

Dedicate the time to really work at my song. This takes planning, and multiple 90-minute sessions are better than hours-long marathons. Part of this plan is deciding when I would like my song ready for someone's review, sticking to this schedule and not settling for a polished draft until the date planned. Masterpieces are

never written on the first go, so I will need to revisit the open mode multiple times and commit myself to the requisite time needed to produce the most creative product.

Have confidence and try not to be afraid of failure. Play is by nature experimental, so I must allow myself the luxury of being wrong. In the case of writing this can be referred to as the luxury of a bad first draft. The bad first draft is the marble from which I will sculpt my polished draft. Also, I must have the confidence to share my ideas with others I like and trust as it is easier to be creative with other people around. In the open mode there is no such thing as a bad or wrong idea, and all ideas do not need to be my own.

Have a sense of humor, which is something that can get you quickly into the open mode. This does not mean I can't write a serious song, but I need to approach the task with a good sense of humor and be aware that when things are getting too intense it's time to take a break.

So I'm going to give Cleese's steps a go. Who knows, by the time I next jam with the Kruger Brothers I just might be in a position to let my own creativity shine through. (Now that will take some confidence.) ►

Profile

Glen Herbert: writer, editor, blogger, friend

You may not know it, but if you've read the newsletter, visited the Kruger website, or read the liner notes to the recent recordings, you've had a taste of some of the things that Glen Herbert does, both professionally and for fun.

by Dan Shearer

Glen Herbert, free-lance writer, musician, and director of communications for the Kruger Brothers, like so many others, came to know the Krugers when he attended his first MerleFest—that was ten years ago—accompanied by a group of his Canadian friends who have since become strong supporters of the Kruger Brothers. (Kruger Brother followers are well aware of the presence the Krugers enjoy in Canada. Learn more about

the history of the Krugers' connection with Glen and his friends by going to page three of the "News" link on the Kruger Brothers' website where you will find an article written by Glen titled *Making Connections*, a piece that appeared in the June 2012 edition of the MerleFest Newsletter.)

The summer camp in Canada mentioned in that article where the Krugers were hired to perform as a surprise for the camp director's 50th birthday, while not named in the article, is called Camp Wanakita. Having attended Camp Wanakita as children and now as adults with their families, each spring a group of Canadians, mostly from Ontario, many of whom play guitar or banjo, drive their RVs down to North Wilkesboro, park them at a campground they call "The Compound" near MerleFest, and enjoy four days of music at the festival plus jamming at the compound. But unlike most of his Canadian pals, Glen did not attend Camp Wanakita until his wife, Laura, who had been going to the camp since she was five years old, brought Glen to the camp soon after they met.

So as Director of Communication for the Kruger Brothers, what does Glen do? Almost everything you can think of. He developed, wrote, and now maintains the KB website, the online store, and all of the press materials including promotional text; he writes and edits this newsletter (which he started on a volunteer basis), serves as liaison with venues—providing them with press kits, text and photos—and arranges interviews with the Kruger Brothers. He also wrote the CD liner notes for the *Appalachian Concerto*, the *Christmas CD*, and *Best of the Kruger Brothers*.

Glen's life and career before becoming involved with the Kruger Brothers is as impressive as it is varied. A native Canadian, Glen's musical background began when he took classical piano lessons from age nine to sixteen. Then, in high school, Glen discovered the guitar, which he played throughout college. Later, as a young adult, Glen was singing in a Karaoke bar in Toronto—he had lived in Japan for two years, so was well-versed in Karaoke—when Laura Gerber walked in. The next day he told a friend, "I met the woman I'm going

to marry last night." And he was right.

Singing and playing guitar continues to serve him well, for these days, one of the joys in Glen's life is teaching at a local senior center where, like Jens Kruger, Glen is committed to teaching how to, as Glen puts it, "engage in the culture of music, not just where to put your fingers on the instrument."

Glen's academic career as a publisher, editor, and writer was launched when he received his Masters in Literature at the University of Guelph in Ontario. However, before pursuing his professional career, Glen took time off to teach English in Japan for two years, followed by several months of travel throughout Europe and Asia. When he returned to Toronto, he took a job at a bookstore before joining an educational publishing company, first as an assistant editor, then, five years later, as Developmental Editor.

After getting married in 2002, Glen and Laura moved to Burlington, Ontario, a move which found Glen commuting to Toronto while Laura, a pediatrician, found work in a local hospital. But, longing to leave the corporate world and become self-employed, and with encouragement from Laura, Glen quit the publishing company and began his career as a freelance writer, specializing in educational publications, a profession he continues to enjoy to this day. Learn more about Glen and his projects by visiting his website: <http://glenherbert.com/>

Over the last several years of my writing for this newsletter from my home in Saluda, NC, Glen and I have become good friends and colleagues, frequently sharing ideas that find themselves in print. To put it simply, Glen does a lot for the Kruger Brothers, most of it from behind the scenes; this profile has only touched the surface. Glen, Laura, and their three children live in Burlington near the northern shore of Lake Ontario. ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.



The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The **MerleFest** countdown is on! The KBs will be playing the Creekside Stage at noon on Friday and the Walker Centre at 2:30 that afternoon. They have another Creekside set at 1:15 on Saturday. On Sunday, the *piece de resistance*: a performance of the Appalachian Concerto with the Kontras Quartet on the Watson Stage. MerleFest has been and continues to be a very important event in the bands' annual schedule. • The CD **Doc: Remembering Doc Watson**, a Kruger Brothers' tribute to the life and music of Doc Watson, will be launched later this month. Check back to the website in the first week of May for order info. • It's with sadness that, at the end of this month, we say goodbye to **Philip Zanon**, who is leaving the Kruger Brothers' organization in order to pursue other interests, one of the most important being to spend more time with his growing family. While he may no longer be on staff with Double Time and the Krugers, he will continue to be the "fourth Brother" that he has been since first working with Jens in the mid-1990s, becoming a full-time member of the group in 1997. He is principally a sound engineer and has mixed every show and recording the Kruger Brothers have done since then. And, even if he won't be at all the shows, he still won't be that far away. Philip lives in Wilkesboro, NC, with his wife Sara and their three children, Ben, Anna and Norah. ▶

On the Road

April 5-6, Common Ground on the Hill, Westminster, MD
 April 14, Society of the Four Arts, Palm Beach, FL
 April 25-28, Merlefest, Wilkesboro, NC
 May 3-5, Kruger Brothers' Music Academy, Wilkesboro, NC
 May 15-17, Silver Dollar City, Branson, MO
 May 23, Stoughton Opera House, Stoughton, WI

www.krugerbros.com



Dusty Bradshaw trying to look imposing and not quite pulling it off. He'll be traveling with the KBs to provide tour support so, when you see him at a show, be sure to say hi. Having spoken to him, you'll be glad that you did. See page 2 for Dan's profile of Dusty.

News

Musicians united to protect Bristol Bay

One mine, a pristine bay, and a group of musicians trying to make a difference.

Si Kahn, one of the three co-founders of Musicians United To Protect Bristol Bay, is putting the finishing touches on his 18th CD, *Bristol Bay*. The CD has 13 original songs that Si wrote during his first trip to Alaska in September 2010, including a visit to Bristol Bay, plus songs co-written with Grammy winners Tom Chapin and Jon Vezner.

The CD closes with an instrumental titled "Bristol Bay" written and performed by Jens Krüger who also produced the album. (Jens also produced Si's CD *Courage*, which was named the #1 CD for 2012 on the international Folk DJ List.)

All proceeds from the album, including Si's songwriter and artist royalties, will go directly to

support the work of Musicians United To Protect Bristol Bay. Every stop on Si's concert, festival, and media tour that is being built around the album will be used to spread the word about the struggle to stop the Pebble Mine and to protect Bristol Bay permanently.

The issue

Bristol Bay in Alaska is one of the

richest wild fisheries remaining in the world, if not *the* richest. Approximately fifty percent of all wild fish caught in North America come from Bristol Bay, including the great majority of the world's sockeye salmon, which spawn in the headwaters of the many rivers that drain into the Bay. Over two thousand commercial permits are fished annually in the region,



If built, the planned mine will transform the region of Bristol Bay, Alaska, and endanger the world's largest salmon fishery.

supporting thousands of families.

Bristol Bay is home to several thousand Native Alaskan families living largely by what they call 'subsistence,' who depend on the Bay, its rivers and forests to survive. Native Alaskans are among the only native peoples in North America who are still living where they have always lived. In Bristol Bay, members of the Yup'ik people have lived along these rivers for over 10,000 years.

The rivers that flow into Bristol Bay comprise one of the world's great fishing and wilderness areas, providing deep satisfaction to those who are lucky enough to live or visit there, contributing substantially to the economic well-being of people in that region of the state and throughout Alaska.

Now a British/Canadian gold and copper mining consortium wants to build what would be the world's largest open-pit mine next to the headwaters of the rivers where the salmon spawn. No open-pit mine in the world has ever operated without causing serious and usually permanent environmental destruction to the surrounding area and beyond. If the Pebble Mine is built, it's very likely the end of everything Bristol Bay is and stands for.

The musicians

In August 2010, recognizing the role that music could play in motivating people to join the fight to stop the Pebble Mine and protect Bristol Bay, Palmer resident Dan Strickland, who has fished commercially in Alaska for 30 years, and several of whose children now fish in Bristol Bay, invited Si Kahn to come to Alaska to write songs about the struggle to stop the Pebble Mine. He has a 47-year history as an organizer and musician, and his experience with national and international campaigns of this nature.

Si Kahn has long been a close friend and colleague of the Kruger Brothers, and they have often shared a stage. There are some other musicians on the disc that you may know as well, perhaps most notably, Pete Seeger, who contributed a recording of "Which Side are you On" to the project. ►

New music

Tribute to Doc Watson

Below is an excerpt from the liner notes to the upcoming CD Doc: Remembering Doc Watson a tribute to the life and music of Doc Watson.

by Uwe, Joel, and Jens

Doc was our friend long before he had ever heard of us. We felt close to him. Luckily for us all, he recorded a vast repertoire that enabled him to touch the hearts of millions and fill them with a longing for a better world. His infectious enthusiasm yet humble approach to his art made us want to travel the world as musicians.

We had always hoped that one day we would get the chance to meet Doc and be able to thank him. The invitation to play at MerleFest in 1997 gave us that opportunity. The following fall we wrote a song that became Doc's favorite song of the Kruger Brothers, "Carolina in the Fall."

In the years to follow, our friendship with Doc grew. He invited us many times to their home where we would play some of the old songs for RosaLee that she so loved. Sometimes, he would go down to the basement and bring up Merle's old banjo for Jens to play "Frosty Morn" or "The Cuckoo." What an incredible feeling it was when Doc and Charles Welch would show up at some of our local shows and Doc would sit in with us for a few numbers. We were extremely honored when Doc asked us to take part in the recording of the 15th Anniversary DVD of MerleFest from which the track Shady Grove on this CD was taken.

Doc would always call Joel his "buddy" and called on him to help out on local shows when we were not on the road. To be able to back Doc up as the Kruger Brothers on some of his final shows and to watch in awe as he gave his all on

every song are some of the most memorable moments of our musical careers.

The passing of Doc and RosaLee in 2012 has not ended our friendship. As long as there is a song and a flat top guitar, there will be a part of Doc Watson living on.

The CD will be available in early May.

Profile

'Dusty' Bradshaw

A new face, and lots of new ideas—the latest member of the KB team is already a great friend and accomplice. Starting this spring, Dusty Bradshaw will work with the KBs providing road and technical support.

by Dan Shearer

Dustin "Dusty" Bradshaw is "our 'genuine' mountain man," says Joel Landsberg. And not just because Dusty lives in the mountains—he lives outside of Boone, NC, on a large tract of land given to his family by his grandmother—but also because he cares for the land and its resources, practicing restoration forestry, the policy of returning forests to a more natural, healthy, and fire resistant condition. (He even cuts timber using a team of horses to haul it.)

That's not to say that Dusty was always a "mountain man" who, as Dusty says of himself, "likes trucks, dogs, and dirt roads," nor does he stay in the hills. Actually, he's quite a traveler, having been born in England, then moving to North Carolina with his family, and later as a young man working with an L.A. band. He visits Alaska a couple of times a year and has traveled with the KBs to Europe, Canada, and the Bahamas.

After moving to North Carolina and growing up mostly in Charlotte, Dusty attended two state supported universities, leaving the first one to build a home for his mom on the family's property and leaving the second one to take advantage of the opportunity to work and travel with Sally Jaye and the band "The Ladies Gun Club."

And so began his musical career, one in which Dusty lists his various

duties over the years as tour management, promotions, booking, and production. More recently, Dusty has worked with North Carolina based Jay Brown, who often plays with "The Lazybirds," and with whom Dusty occasionally sings and plays guitar. One of his music related jobs was producer of the Doc Watson Festival, also known as "MusicFest'n Sugar Grove" North Carolina, where the Kruger Brothers are returning to perform this July. It was at this festival where Dusty became close friends with Philip Zanon, working with Philip to improve the festival's sound, staging, and lighting. Dusty also helped at Carolina in the Fall in the first years of the festival.

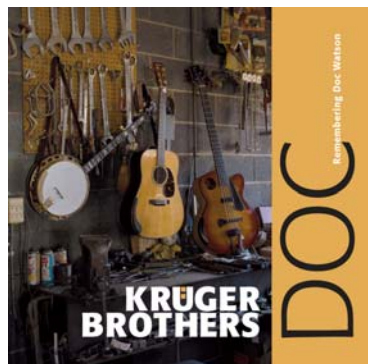
Like so many others, Dusty first heard the Kruger Brothers at the 1997 MerleFest when he and Josh Day, the percussionist who often performs with the Krugers, were passing by the stage where the Krugers were performing. But Dusty didn't meet the Krugers themselves until about four years later when he ran into Jens at a get-together "somewhere in the state" and later met Uwe backstage of the Walker Center at MerleFest.

Dusty recalls that his working relationship with the Krugers started out casually with, in Joel's words, "giving Philip a little relief from all the heavy lifting that he was doing." Soon Dusty began traveling with the band, doing everything he could, technically and physically, to contribute to the effectiveness of each performance, or as he says, to "grease the wheels," whether that be working with amps, instruments, and cables or serving as liaison with the house and/or stage managers. He's proud of the role he is playing with the Kruger Brothers in this transition period, preparing for Philip leaving the band after MerleFest.

And, so far, it's been working exceptionally well. Joel says, "We all enjoy his great positive attitude and think that he's so easy to work with. He really is the ultimate 'caretaker' for us on and off the stage." ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.





The official voice of the Kruger Brothers

The Krüger Brothers Newsletter

"all the places they have been to, all the things that they have seen"

In the News

The Krugers' tribute to Doc Watson, **Doc: Remembering Doc Watson**, was released on the 24th. The album features 14 tracks, all recorded for this project, as well as a recording of the KBs playing "Shady Grove" with Doc on stage in 2002. It is available through our online store as well as at live events. • The KBs are just coming off another great **MerleFest!** As always, it's an important event for the band, and this year included some great collaborations. **Jerry Douglas** joined the KBs on stage during a tribute set to Doc Watson, performing with them a song that was a favorite of Watson's, Tom Paxton's "Leaving London." On Sunday afternoon, despite lots of rain (see "Memories" this page) the KBs were joined once again by the **Kontras Quartet** for a performance of the Appalachian Concerto. And on Saturday afternoon Jens took part in what is by any measure a true MerleFest blockbuster, the star studded **Hillside Album Hour** hosted by the Waybacks. Each year they and a stable of guests play, song-for-song, an entire album from pop music history. This year the set was devoted to a presentation of The Band's 1974 live collaboration with Bob Dylan, *Before the Flood*. ►

On the Road

May 3-5, Kruger Brothers' Music Academy, Wilkesboro, NC
 May 15-17, Silver Dollar City, Branson, MO
 May 23, Stoughton Opera House, Stoughton, WI
 May 24, S.P.A.C.E., Evanston, IL
 May 26, Strawberry Music Festival, Groveland, CA
 June 1, Strawberry Park Bluegrass and Folk Festival, Preston, CT
 June 15, The University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Winston Salem, NC
 June 22, Blue Ridge Music Center, Galax VA



Hey, that's Phillip! The Kruger Brothers take part in the MerleFest outreach program, which brings music into Wilkes County schools in the days leading up to the start of the festival. Here, Phillip set up the sound and then took a seat within the audience—he's able to control the sound levels wirelessly through the iPad that you can see resting on his knees. Phillip Zanon has been a part of the Kruger Brothers for the past 15 years, serving as sound engineer both on recordings and in concert. He's been with them so long that there really isn't anything that you have heard from the Kruger Brothers that hasn't passed through his eminently capable hands. Phillip came as a friend and, of course, he leaves as one, having decided to come off the road in order to spend time with his young family.

Photo courtesy Patsy Schmidt

News

Memories of MerleFest 2013

A great time, and lots of great music.

By Dan Shearer

On Sunday, the final day of MerleFest, only the loyalist of friends and fans braved the rain that had been steadily pouring all day, to find a wet seat in front of the "Main Stage." We came to hear the Kruger Brothers and the Kontras Quartet perform the Appalachian Concerto, a performance the two groups and their fans had been looking forward to for months, expecting this special event to draw thousands. And, except for the rain, it would have. There we

were, some of us in full rain gear, others huddling under their umbrellas, trying in good faith to keep from blocking folks behind - those of us without boots getting our shoes soaked in the puddles that had formed.

But it was worth it! Unlike most of the previous performances of the concerto, the Krugers and the string quarter started right in, without the expected introduction by Jens about the sources for the inspiration behind his composition, the reason it turns out was that they needed the full hour for music. And despite the distractions and noise from the downpour, it was a spectacular performance, as one has grown to expect from this unique musical partnership between the Kontras and the Krugers, plus Josh Day, the Wilkes County "local boy" who these days often performs with the Krugers, on drums.

The concerto lasts about half an hour, leaving another half hour of playing time. Typically, the Kruger Brothers play a set by themselves and then bring out the Kontras. For this performance, however, after the concerto the groups played four songs for which Jens had written arrangements for string quartet—"Carolina in the Fall," "Jason," "Calling Banagher," the tune Jens composed so the group could play an Irish fiddle tune unknown to the Irish, and "Jack of the Wood," which often begins with Jens grinning and sounding out the melody with "dahs," but this time, much to the audience's delight, everyone on stage joined in with the "dahs" at the beginning and the end of the tune.

I thought the event was over, but then Uwe told the "crowd" that the band wanted to play one more song. His intro, however, led me, and I suppose others, to assume

that they would finish with a Doc Watson tune, because Uwe started with a story about Doc. Late in life, Doc told him that, while life had been so good and fulfilling, Doc had one regret. Looking back on how his career had required so much travel, Doc regretted having to be away from his family so much. Then Uwe told the audience how much he and the rest of the Krugers shared with Doc that same sense of loss that comes with having to be on the road so frequently.

Once again, I thought that Uwe was leading up to singing a mournful Doc Watson song. But Uwe's story took a right turn—a segue so to speak. He announced to the crowd that today was Philip Zanon's last day as the Kruger Brothers' sound man, that Philip, who is often referred to as the "Fourth Kruger Brother", was leaving the band so he could spend more time with his family. Then Uwe told us in a touching moment that he, Jens and Joel were dedicating their last song, "Fields of Gold," to Philip. The Kruger Brothers, Josh, and the Kontras Quartet ended the show with that beautiful tune, which in my opinion has become one of the Krugers' signature songs. Boy, am I glad I went. ►

News

The KBs made the Shiny Sheet!

The Palm Beach Daily News, known as the Shiny Sheet, is the official voice of all things Palm Beach. The photos carried there define the rarified culture that exists in Palm Beach, and many socialites long to be captured in its pages. This spring, after a date at the Palm Beach Society for the Four Arts, the Krugers got a great notice in the sheet, and here is an excerpt from their review:

"... On this particular Sunday, the trio was true to form, hitting on all cylinders, and the addition of the Kontras strings provided a delightful icing on the cake.

Early on the Brothers went right to one of their staples, the Krugerized version of a famous 'train song,' Curtis Mayfield's People Get Ready, that was equal parts down home, Old Timey, soulful and funky.

The Kontras Quartet (the name means 'contrasts' in the Afrikaans language) joined the trio for a performance of Jens' 'Appalachian Concerto' There was an immediate connection between the piece and the string section, in that the members of the Kontras Quartet are all from different corners of the globe. This wide range of perspectives brought a vibrant approach to this colorful composition. The Kontras held their own throughout, carrying the sweet and sentimental second movement of the concerto with crisp precision, and then joining with the trio for the triumphant third movement that brought the audience to its feet.

As in previous appearances here, the second half of the concert was more informal, with old Kruger favorites like Watches The Clouds Roll By and Carolina In The Fall, many of which featuring new string arrangements by Jens were making their world premiere. Of particular note were Sting's haunting Fields Of Gold and a musical experiment: a live classical/bluegrass mash-up, where musical worlds happily collide, this time on the classic Orange Blossom Special. As Jens slowly upped the tempo from 'unbelievably fast' to 'full breakneck' a friendly competition ensued between the young 'fiddlers' and the master pickers – to the delight of the Four Arts audience." ►

The KBs are delighted to play the Society for the Four Arts each year as part of their subscription series.

Concert Review

Red Molly at the City Winery, NYC

There is more to music than the Kruger Brothers, of course, and here John Lafferty reports on two acts that, while different, deliver what he calls a "Kruger Brother-esque high."

by John Lafferty

My childhood friend David, a professor at NYU, has a penthouse apartment in Greenwich Village just 1 block south of Washington Square. Really! I can sit playing his grand piano and look out at the



Red Molly: L to R Abbie Gardner, Laurie MacAllister, Molly Ventnor

Chrysler building. Fortunately, David is happy to have me visit often so I hike down there at least twice a year. In planning my trips I check the websites of favorite performers to see if they will be in the New York area during my visit. Last year I saw Tim O'Brien and this February it was Red Molly at the City Winery in the heart of Greenwich Village.

I booked our reservations and seats for dinner and the concert online. We arrived at the City Winery for dinner at 6 pm as instructed. It's on Varick St. just south of the point where Varick changes to 7th Ave S. The venue is a spacious handsome room full of wood beams with seats on two levels providing good views of the stage. The Winery has a vast selection of wines on tap, many of which are made on site. I ordered a house zinfandel and was very pleased with it. For dinner David had braised short ribs and I filed mignon. Both meals were excellent and the service was friendly and efficient.

The stage was set for The Steel Wheels from Virginia. I was pleased to see it arranged so David would experience the choreography of a band singing and playing around a single microphone. The Steel Wheels did not disappoint playing original and cover material in "... a perfect blend of harmony and strings that take you back to the old home place where it was a joy to be alive." (Larry Winters, KPFT Houston, TX) They are anchored around Trent Wagler's tenor voice, guitar and banjo, ably accompanied by Eric

Brubaker on fiddle, Jay Lapp on mandolin and Brian Dickel on bass. They are top notch players contributing musically interesting solo and background instrumentation. We thoroughly enjoyed their set.

Next followed Red Molly, a fetching female trio from NYC I've seen at Merlefest in past years. They are Abbie Gardner on dobro, Molly Ventnor on guitar and Laurie MacAllister on bass. All three musicians have well trained voices and take turns singing lead and harmony.

Their material is mesmerizing; beautifully sung with enchanting harmonies that touch the soul. The music is accentuated by Abbie Gardner's tuneful dobro solos. Truly "Red Molly has earned a place among the elite female trio" (John Platt, WFUV New York, NY). We were held enthralled for 90 minutes, listening to well-crafted original material and cover songs, including a tuneful and very sexy rendition of "Fever" done by Molly with stand-up bass accompaniment by Brian Dickel.

The concert finale and encore was performed by both groups and included a spirited rendition of Woody Guthrie's "Oklahoma Hills" to which we all sang along. I left the concert on a Kruger Brother-esque high. ►



The Kruger Brothers Newsletter is compiled and edited by Glen Herbert. Send comments or story ideas to glenherbert@sympatico.ca. To subscribe or unsubscribe visit www.krugerbros.com.