

OCTOBER 2018

# SGN SCOOPS

GAZINE



## RUSS TAFF

*You better believe it*



**ALSO FEATURING**



Arthur Rice, Brian Free and Assurance & B.J. Pons

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	Publisher's Point by Rob Patz
6	Arthur Rice by Justin Gilmore
11	Can You Handle The Truth by David Staton
15	Russ Taff by Craig Harris
21	DJ Spotlight on Kyle Dowden by Vonda Easley
24	Younger Perspective on Canaan Coffman by Erin Stevens
<b>Christian Country</b>	
27	Kelsi Robertson- Harrigill of Flatt Lonesome by Cheryl Smith
31	SGN Scoops' Christian Country Top 40
34	Day by Day with Selena Day
37	The Pathfinders by Charlie Griffin
41	SGNScoops' Gospel Music Top 100
46	B.J. Pons by Dixie Phillips
50	Randall Reviews It with Randall Hamm
53	Brian Free and Assurance by John Herndon
56	Editor's Last Word by Lorraine Walker
59	Contributors

## OUR MISSION

SGNScoops exists to promote the gospel by unveiling what is intriguing and real about Southern Gospel and Christian Country music. With integrity, we aspire to strengthen Christians, highlight people who are fulfilling a call to minister and emphasize the music that inspires audiences and glorifies God.

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# PUBLISHER'S POINT

**by Rob Patz**

Welcome to the October Publisher's Point.

As I sit down to write this, we have just closed the National Quartet Convention for another year. It was awesome. Thanks to everybody who worked so hard to put together a fantastic event.

Now we look forward to Creekside 2018 and all that it has in store. I'm excited about this year for many reasons. One, I get a chance to introduce you to the people who read our magazine, some of my new friends who are going to be there this year to sing, plus reacquaint you with some old friends who have been with us since the start.

As I was writing this, I begin to think of what all went into the planning process of the first year of Creekside; how underprepared I really was and how awesome God was to step in and bring people of value from day one who would help with everything from seating the people to arranging the midnight prayer time.

So today, I want to share with you my heart. I want to tell you a little bit about what I hope you experience this year when you come and visit us for Creekside 2018.

I want you to experience the friendships that are cultivated during this time. You're going to get the opportunity to meet new artists and new fans; people that you may never have heard of before. My prayer is that the time you leave this week they will be like old friends.

I hope you enjoy the experience of listening to new music and hearing new speakers. I hope above all that during the time we're together for four and a half days, that we point you in the direction of Christ. We can spend an entire year planning an event, but that event will fall short if we don't point you to Christ and a personal relationship with him.

During the next few weeks, you will see items on social media about everything that we are doing as we prepare. In my head, I began counting down the days several months ago. I'm ready to see what God has in store. I believe there is going to be a move of God this year. I'm excited about C.T. Townsend being with us and preaching in a way that only he can, stirring the souls of all listeners.



If you told me seven years ago that I would still be planning this event and that it would've grown to the size that it is now, where it takes a crew of people months on end to organize, I could not have imagined it. But here we are in countdown mode, getting ready to see everyone we love and excited to meet new people.

A couple of years ago we realized that at Creekside, "we are family," and that became our slogan. I truly begin to embrace it because at the end of the day, family is so important to what we're doing.

So come join us for Creekside 2018. We want to fill the Smoky Mountain Convention Center with praise and prayer over four days. Join me this year and become part of our family.

Until next month, this is the Publisher's Point.

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# God Is Faithful: A Look at Arthur Rice of The Kingdom Heirs

By Justin Gilmore

Since 1995, the powerful, soulful, and energetic voice of Arthur Rice has been an anchor in the signature sound of the Kingdom Heirs. Rice's incredible lead vocals delight audiences all over the world. He has experienced great success in his career having been nominated for many industry awards. Rice also serves as the President of the Southern Gospel Music Association and a deacon at his home church FBC Sevierville.

Gospel Music has always been a part of Rice's life.

"I'm the youngest of four kids and the only boy in my family," relates Rice. "My dad sang in several quartets along with my mom and oldest sister even before I was born, so I've been around church and singing all my life. I started singing solos with my family when I was old enough to stand in a chair."

It wasn't long until the gospel group bug bit young Rice.

"Then I started playing bass guitar for my dad's quartet when I was seven and sang lead for them when I turned 14. I went with a mixed group called the Gerald Payne Family when I was 18 and that was when Eldridge Fox heard me sing."

Fox's notice eventually led to Rice's first major mainstream quartet position. Rice served as lead singer and bass player for the legendary Kingsmen Quartet from 1983 - 1989. It was a natural fit as Rice and his family were already acquainted with the group.

"My family had always been friends with the Kingsmen through Ray Dean," explains Rice. "My dad's quartet was the first group Ray ever sang in and we're second cousins. A short time after being in concert with the Kingsmen, Foxy called and asked if I would be interested in singing with the mighty Kingsmen. That was in 1983. I was there till '89 and I left the road for a year to help take over my dad's shop after he had a brain aneurysm. The Lord healed him and gave us many more years with him."

Following his tenure with the Kingsmen, Rice sang with fellow Kingsmen member, Squire Parsons, for five years before joining the Kingdom Heirs, where he has remained for 22 years.

Rice cites many of great groups and vocalists as inspiration for his own unique, recognizable sound.



“We had one gospel station in our area; my dad turned all the radios to it then pulled all the knobs off so nobody could change the station,” laughs Rice. “So about all I grew up listening to was gospel music. I loved it all, but I guess my biggest influences were the Kingsmen, the Inspirations, the Happy Goodmans, and the Statesmen. But, when I was around 16, I discovered Ronnie Milsap. Wow, what a voice and range.

“After my voice changed at 14, my mom found a voice teacher for me,” Rice continues. “She drove me the hour trip every week until I was old enough to drive myself. I took lessons for seven years. Mr. Brookshire was from Juilliard but unlike most teachers we talked to, he allowed me to sing gospel music instead of just opera. I’m very grateful that my mom believed in me enough to make that sacrifice.”

Rice’s incredible voice is featured on the newest CD from the Kingdom Heirs.

“Our latest album, ‘The Last Big Thing,’ is a great album full of incredible songs. It has two top-five songs already on radio and the title song was voted 2018 Song Of The Year,” says Rice.

This hit project also includes a new release that pulls on the heartstrings.



“Our latest radio single is ‘Heaven Just Got Sweeter.’ It’s written by Jerry Salley and Dianne Wilkinson. We were going in the studio to record tracks for the new album and we had already finalized our songs when Jeff’s dad passed away from bone cancer. Dianne sent me a copy of the song to just play for Jeff to encourage him, but after I heard it, I thought it would encourage a lot of other folks. Little did I know that in just short few months, how it would encourage me when I lost my middle sister

from cancer in October 2017,” Rice shares.

This is the mission of Rice and the group as well. It is of the utmost importance to show God’s love, comfort and encouragement through their music.



“While I was with the Kingsmen, I was driving the bus late one night, listening to some preaching on the radio,” recalls Rice. “I heard that old preacher say: ‘I’m just a nobody, trying to tell everybody, about somebody, who can save anybody.’ I loved it so I adopted that as my mission statement.”

Rice and the rest of the group are blessed to minister to many people all over the country as well as the world. While they travel for several months of the year, they primarily perform at Dollywood in Tennessee.

“The great thing about being at Dollywood most of the year is being able to sing to so many new faces everyday. I always ask how many are seeing us for the first time and even after all these years I’m still blown away with how many in our audience have never seen us before. We have a good following like any other group that come to see us on a regular basis, but being in a secular theme park affords us a great opportunity to present our music and message to basically the whole world. Dollywood has never told us what we could or couldn’t sing or say over the years, and we really take the responsibility that the Lord has given us very serious. We could just sing some fun songs or just something to make people clap and have a good time, but we believe God put us here for a reason. We decided years ago that we were gonna pick songs that were spiritually and scripturally sound and that’s what we do. Sure we have fun and want people to laugh and have a good time, but we also want them to leave knowing they heard about a loving Savior and his name is Jesus. There’s a world of hurting people

out there and we need to give them hope. We need to give them Jesus,” states Rice.

Christ and the music come first for this ministry minded group.



“All people want is ‘real,’” Rice explains. “They don’t want to see us be perfect, they want to see how we deal with day to day life. We fail miserably to be perfect. As Paul says, the things I want to do I don’t do and the things I don’t want to I keep doing over and over but, God is faithful. We just need to brag on Him. I love to share stories and experiences of how the Lord can be everything to us. He loves us and wants us to include him in every aspect of our lives from the smallest to the large. That’s how to witness, we just live it, just be real in front of people.”

Rice has had some very real moments with issues like dependency and depression.

“Back in 2000 I had back surgery; I had been on a lot of very strong pain medications and after my surgery it really started affecting me physically and mentally,” recalls Rice. “I lost 60 pounds because I couldn’t eat anything and I was slowly going into depression. No matter how much I prayed and read the Bible I couldn’t get out of the hole I was in. I had a doctor’s appointment and I know now it was God that ordained that visit. I’d never seen that doctor before and it was almost like she knew what was going on before I even told her. She helped me with some medicine for the depression. After going cold turkey to get off all the pain meds, it gave me a whole different respect for folks that go through that stuff. But the Lord helped me and brought me through it all, and I’ve not had anymore issues with my back, praise the Lord.

“About 2002, Barbara Huffman interviewed me for another publication and we talked about my depression and what the Lord did for me,” Rice continues. “Fast forward 12 years, I’m standing at our booth at NQC and a young man walks up to me and says, ‘You don’t know me, but I was addicted to painkillers. I had attempted suicide and when I was in the hospital, my nurse gave me your article to read. I accepted Christ and he helped me get through the worst time of my life.’

“I had forgotten all about the article but God was still using the testimony of the most difficult time in my life to encourage someone else. The apostle Paul says that we comfort others with the same comfort that was given us.” It is moments like this that put life into perspective for Rice.

On Oct. 29, Arthur Rice will be honored by Dr. Jerry Goff at the Creekside Gospel Music Convention, with the Jerry Goff SGN Scoops Lifetime Achievement Award. This event will feature stories, songs, and people from Rice’s career in Southern gospel music.



“I’ve never really aspired to win awards or accolades of my own. Those things are nice but in the grand scheme they’re really not important. When I was in my teens, my pastor gave a message about blooming where you are planted. I took that to heart and that’s how I’ve tried to live my life. God has allowed the music that I love to put me in places and situations to be a light and I’m very grateful that He has allowed me those opportunities. I may not have accomplished everything that I could have but I’ve done way more than I ever dreamed.”

“I’m the least deserving of anyone to be recognized so you don’t know how honored I am to receive this, and from one of my all time heroes,” confesses Rice. “When I started with the Kingsmen we worked a lot with the Goffs. Jerry gave me a copy of his books at the time and



they so inspired me to want to be a better Christian. I still have them in my collection.”

The future is looking bright for Rice and the Kingdom Heirs as we approach the last few months of the year.



“I’m so excited about our future and what God has in store for the group,” Rice exclaims. “We have a pretty unique situation. We are right in the middle of a secular theme park and basically the world comes to us. We get to tell a lot of people about Jesus and the devil doesn’t like that. He has tried his best to destroy us, but God is faithful. We covet your prayers that we will stay faithful to the Lord and that he will continue to allow us to be a voice crying in the wilderness.”

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A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie is holding a vintage-style microphone in his right hand and a gavel in his left. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a solid black. Overlaid on the right side of the image is the text 'Can You Handle The' in a white, sans-serif font, and 'TRUTH?' in a large, red, distressed, stencil-like font.

# Music, ministry, and money

By David Staton

Music, ministry, and money. Whether the conversation is between a music minister and a booking agent, or between the artist and a pastor, these are the three subjects that must be addressed.

I really hope there are some pastors reading this as well as artists, because at some point we have to be honest and determine how effective we are as singers, and as ministers. Our effectiveness should be what makes a pastor want to plan an event that welcomes an artist into their church.

If all we do as singers is sing our song and occasionally speak in very general terms, then God help us.

As a pastor, if your budget allowance is determined only by the fame of the artist, then God help us. I believe it is past time for singers and preachers to hit a reset button by asking ourselves some really honest questions, and weighing those honest answers in light of scripture and common sense. For artists, let's start with vocal and musical skill. As much as we don't want to think that this matters, it does. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being incredible, where do you fall? Chances are, whatever number you rated yourself at, take two points away. That is probably an accurate assessment because most artists place themselves a little higher than their audience would. Like I said, we have to an-

swer these questions honestly. No matter where you fall on the scale, this gives us all something to work on.

Now let's evaluate your presentation. First let's look at your songs that make up your program. Do you do original material, or do you do mostly songs that have been made popular by other artists? Do you do a mixture of originals and covers? If so, what is the ratio? How powerful are the original songs in your program? Don't rate the songs by your standards, weigh them by the reaction of the audience every time you perform them. Each song is like a piece of a larger puzzle, and if they all work together and build to an effective response, then you have a complete puzzle.

Now, all of the songs should support what you say and do in your presentation, leading up to a powerful point of decision for the audience. If they don't, you may have a lot of puzzle pieces, but at the end of the night, they do not create a finished picture. When this happens, the audience is left with some puzzle pieces, but not a complete, finished presentation that represents anything that impacts them.

I see this a lot. Random songs are selected based on style, vocal ability, and how much the group sounds like the original artist. Some songs may have a great message, but if they don't flow with presentation as a

whole, you just have good puzzle pieces that do not add anything to the overall picture. Finding the right songs for any artist is so important. We have covered some vital areas when it comes to music, but let's talk ministry. After all, this is what everyone claims is so important to them. When you talk, who are you talking to? It's easy to condition yourself to assume that you are always singing to church people who have heard and can relate to what you're saying. We even use the same church slang to make sure they know we are one of them. But what happens on those rare occasions when you are put in front of a crowd that is not in a church, nor do they go to one?

This is when I see artists, even the ones who talk about how it's all about ministry, start sweating. They know that the quality of their music probably will not measure up to what that crowd is used to, and they also know that their talking that is geared to be inside of a church is going to sound foreign. In spite of all of this, most will just plow right through their normal presentation and not connect on any level with one person in the crowd.

This is a rare opportunity to effectively connect with people and say something that will make a difference, but too many times, we don't know what to do. I remember when I was singing with a popular quartet, we found ourselves in this situation. It was a fair, and we were in front of a totally secular crowd. No one there knew anything about gospel music, how many awards we had won, or anything that resembled a national gospel music chart. Do you know what we did?

We opened with the classic Gatlin Brothers, "All The Gold In California." After that, we had the crowd.

We talked about how several country and secular artists got their start in gospel music. We told them how Elvis had only won two Grammy Awards and they were for gospel music recordings, and one of them was for a song called "Without Him." We did the song and I watched grown men who didn't go to church, wipe away tears as the Holy Spirit used that moment to awaken them to their need for Him.

Did anyone shout? No. Did we give an invitation and count how many would come forward? No. Was our ministry effective in that setting? Absolutely! If you're as serious as you say you are about ministry, then take a lesson from the Apostle Paul and look at who you are about to minister to, and say something that will engage

them and make the gospel relevant wherever they are.

In today's world, inside of your average church, let me tell you who you're singing to on any given Sunday morning. Sitting in those pews are people who are addicted to opioids and alcohol. Couples who just yesterday were talking about divorcing and they are there with their kids. Some of them are one step away from suicide, while others have believed a world that tells them that the gender they were born with may not actually be their gender. Some are young girls who just found out they are pregnant and are planning to abort the baby. Most of the men have watched pornography in the last 24 hours.

Do you take all of this into account before you pick those songs and plan on what you're going to say? If not, you are walking into an all-out fiery battle from hell with a water pistol full of some feel good songs that at best resembles a Jesus pep rally. Now, let's talk money. It's the topic that makes artists and pastors uncomfortable when trying to coordinate a date. If a pastor at any point suggests that the amount they will invest in your ministry is based on fame, I can tell you that he is as out of touch as the artists that think they are famous.

If an artist thinks they are a more valuable commodity because of any level of fame they think they've achieved, I can tell you that they are only setting the stage for themselves. I've said it before, but it seems to fit well right here. Fame doesn't mean faithful, and acclaim doesn't mean anointed. There are a lot of famous dog and pony shows that offer nothing that the world or the church needs.

Pastors, this means that you may need to go on some recommendations from other pastors who have experienced a presentation by an artist and how it affected their congregation. Artists, it may mean that you need to step back and really rebuild your ministry into something worth investing in.

I have reached a point in my ministry and career where I am not interested in trying to prove that I am famous enough to be booked at a church. Do I have accolades and awards? Yes. More than most know about because I don't talk about them. Have I been on some impressive stages, with superstar artists? Yes. Have I been broken? Absolutely! More than you know about because I don't talk much about those times.



But everything God has brought me through has prepared me, and I know that my ministry is needed and worth investing in. I refuse to get into a negotiation with a church that only wants the lowest bidder to come fill their pulpit. Wow, did you just read that last sentence? Who I represent and how I represent him is worth far more than that.



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WISE CHOICE PROMOTIONS





# Russ Taff: You better believe it

## Bringing a redeemed life to the big screen

By Craig Harris

### Filmmaking proved to be a challenge for Russ Taff.

“There were long interviews,” Taff says. “They wanted details of things I have been trying to forget.”

“I Still Believe” – a documentary detailing the award-winning vocalist’s life and his battle with alcoholism – is set to appear in select theaters as a one-night event on Oct. 30.

“Rick Altizer, he did the Chonda Pierce movie (‘Chonda Pierce: Laughing in the Dark’) ... he came to my house a couple of years ago,” Taff shares. “We were just talking. He said, ‘Why don’t you let me tell your story?’ He knew a lot of it, but I haven’t talked about it much to anybody.

“It’s been my life’s work to be made whole. He convinced me ... he said, ‘Your story would bring hope to so many people.’”

That hope has come after many hopeless turns.

“It was almost like a mandate from God,” Taff says of revealing his struggles. “But that voice inside of me said, ‘If you tell your whole story, I will get the glory.’ That stuck in me until Rick showed up and said, ‘Can I do a documentary about your life?’ It was time. It’s what Jesus really did and his power ... his power to pull us along, pick us up, dust us off and tell us to keep going.”

Taff’s struggles began at an early age, though they stemmed from circumstances beyond his control.

“I had a father (Joe) who was such a narcissist and a mother (Anne) who was a rageaholic,” Taff reveals. “He was a Pentecostal preacher and also an alcoholic. One year, we’d be in, and the next year, we wouldn’t be in church ... but he loved to preach. He loved that more than anything.”

As a child, Taff found himself in the middle of more adult encounters than he bargained for.

“They voted daddy out of the church,” Taff recalls of one incident. “Mom wanted me to go down there at 9 or 10 years old. Mom wanted me to go down there, because she wanted to know what they said. I just sat there and cried. I got home and told mom. From that point on, those people didn’t talk to me anymore.

“At 11 years old, I learned to play guitar. I could play guitar and sing. That was my outlet, just learning songs and singing with my brothers.”

He quickly began looking for opportunities to perform.

“I walked into church one night after they voted dad out, and my uncle said, ‘What are you doing here Russ,’” Taff recalls.

"I said, 'Well, I'm here to sing.' He said, 'Well, we don't want you here anymore.' It was just so shameful. All of us had to pay the consequences. Shame has dictated so much of my life."

The dynamic between Taff and his parents was complex as well.

"Momma would go off on things," Taff remembers. "You had to walk the line. One year, we could have a Christmas tree. The next year, you couldn't have a Christmas tree. You didn't know where you stood."

The instability that plagued his father's life was overwhelming as well.

"When my dad died in 1997, he was too scared to die," Taff shares. "He was terrified. He would say stuff like, 'I hope my good outweighs the bad.' On his deathbed, he was terrified to cross over."

After detailing some of his childhood experiences, the documentary transitions into Taff's personal battle with alcoholism.

"Then, we move into my story of how I struggled with alcoholism myself," Taff points out. "I was trying to quiet the voices. Guilt ... you did something wrong. The shame is that I am the thing that is wrong. You carry it into your adult life. The code in your brain is, 'Don't let people find out what is going on. Keep it all close to your chest.' The voices just became too much."

"You're winning Grammys (Awards), and the voice says, 'You're not good enough. You'll never be good enough.' I'd win a Grammy, and by the time I would get back to the hotel, you're thinking you're not good enough."

"I'm sure my dad felt the same way. It was just very dysfunctional. As a pastor's kid, you don't tell what's going on at home."

Taff actually grew up in the San Joaquin Valley area of California but moved to Hot Springs, Arkansas, when he was 15 years old. His family moved back to California, but Russ remained in Arkansas to start college.

"We put a little band together," Taff says. "A real revival broke out. I found out a few years later that it was happening all over the county. It was the Jesus movement. Hundreds of people were coming to Christ."

However, alcohol didn't show up in Taff's life until he was 26.

"I was exposed to it because of daddy," Taff says of alcoholism. "I stayed away from it because of my family."

"We were in a place and people were having wine. I thought I'd just have a beer. I felt like such a sinner by just ordering that, because I had never had a beer. We would be somewhere (before that), and I would just get a coke. In a few moments (after having a beer), those voices just quieted. I thought I had found something. I actually was praising God, because I can live this way. This quiets everything that destroyed my life. Unfortunately, it doesn't last."



The pattern of alcoholism had begun.

"Those voices, they weren't accusing me all day long," Taff continues. "They were just quieted. It's such a disgusting thing to do."

"It went on for six or seven years. I was in hell. You're singing for Jesus, and your body is crying out for this drug that will numb you. You have it back at the hotel. You go to the concert and want to go back to the hotel to shut your brain off."





Individuals who were close to Taff made an impact.

“Some people around me saw what was going on, and they loved me,” Taff explains. “I’m caught in this. My body is screaming, and I don’t know how to get out of this horrible, horrible dungeon I was in.

“The Holy Spirit started bringing people into my life.”

Taff was eventually able to get help.

“I had about 10 years of sobriety (from 1988-97),” Taff remembers. “There was so much between my dad and I that was unsettled. I tried to talk to him several times before he died. He didn’t want to go there, because he’s getting ready to see Jesus in about a month or so. He’s dying, and he didn’t want to talk about anything negative. I was just left with nothing from him. He was always jealous of what I did, what I could accomplish and what I was accomplishing. He was the kind of man that couldn’t tell you that I was doing a good job.”

However, the death of his father prompted his toxic habit to resurface ... albeit for only a two-week period.

“When he died, I had nine years of sobriety,” Taff says. “I realized he had crossed over, and I realized I would live the rest of my life with this pain and being unsettled. I started drinking again. Then, I relapsed again nine years later when momma died ... but God brought great people in my life again. I started down this path of, ‘Ok God, heal me.’ I realized to overcome this great place in my brain it was going to take a lot of work, to begin to rewire my brain and get it back

in proper working order.

“One of my older brothers died seven years ago, and that option wasn’t there anymore because I knew how to deal with pain, disappointment and hurt. Through Christian counseling, they gave me tools to deal with it. After a while, I started really getting a hold of it. I started trusting people around me. That for me was a miracle. It’s just been an incredible journey.”

Reliving those days through the making of the film was a difficult process.

“You have worked your way through it,” Taff shares. “It’s your memories. When you sit down and see how low you had gone ... to the point to where you’re begging God to either heal me or kill me. I couldn’t live this way anymore.

“I don’t know if I’m going to be able to even watch it. Tori (Taff’s wife) is saying, ‘Yes, you are.’

Taff has four brothers, two of which are living (Danny and Bill) and two who have passed away (Marvin and Earl).

“All five of us (struggled with alcoholism),” Taff points out. “Some of us got out, and some of us didn’t.”

It was Bill who helped foster Russ’ love for Southern gospel music.

“I grew up with Southern gospel,” Russ says. “My oldest brother (Bill) used to take me to all-night sings and that sort of thing.”

As a teenager, in the summer, Russ would sing with his brothers at revivals that his father was preaching.

When two of his brothers went to serve in the military during the Vietnam War, Russ began to sing with other individuals. At the age of 16, he joined some fellow high-school students in a group called the Sounds of Joy, which played in coffee houses throughout Arkansas. In fact, the group opened up for the Imperials.

“They (the Imperials) heard me sing,” Taff recalls. “A couple of years later, they called me and asked me if I’d like to try out.”



Two weeks prior to his 23rd birthday in 1976, Taff joined in the Imperials.

However, at the time, he wasn’t sure that joining the Imperials was the right move to make.

“I was torn,” Taff explains. “I started working with this evangelist called Jerry Savelle. For the first time in my life, I was really studying the Bible. I was really getting to know the word of God. I grew up with a whole lot of emotionalism and not a lot of the word of God. At that time, those voices weren’t as loud. I was working. Every weekend, we were in revival. I started feeling like, ‘I’m going in the right direction.’ When the Imperials called me, I went and talked to Jerry and said, ‘I don’t know what to do. I’m really growing in the Lord.’ He said, ‘Russ, you go pray about it and decide what you want to do. I’ll consider it the wisdom of God and support you.’

“In about two weeks, I drove to Nashville, tried out, and they hired me that night.”

He married Tori that same year.

“(Tori) would get incredibly angry at me,” Russ shares.

“Then, she would say I believe in you, and I will fight for you until you can fight for yourself. I love her. She was my last, tiny shred of sanity. She prayed for me. She yelled at me. She

loved me. I credit her ... she and Jesus got me through this

“He never gave up on me. He kept coming and loving me. He never stopped ... even when I quit. I pretty much just gave up. Tori and Jesus ... they pulled me along.”

The 64-year-old Taff – a GRAMMY and Dove Award-winning artist who resides in Bell Buckle, Tennessee – has resumed a solo career, following his tenure with the Imperials and a three-year stint as a part of the Gaither Vocal Band. While he still performs at some of the bigger Gaither Homecoming Tour stops, he typically travels two weekends per month as a soloist.

“I enjoy the solo thing very much,” Taff emphasizes. “I love to be able to step up on stage and have an hour and half to sing songs, talk about things and give God glory.”

Locations for the viewing of “I Still Believe” – presented by Fuseic Entertainment and Fathom Events – and ticket information are available by visiting [www.fathomevents.com](http://www.fathomevents.com).

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# DJ SPOTLIGHT

## *Kyle Dowden*



By Vonda Easley

This month the DJ Spotlight is shining bright in Springfield, Missouri. Missouri has a rich history in gospel music, spanning decades from 1925 with the start of the Lesters, to many groups like Faith's Journey and Broken Vessels, traveling the road today. One of the anchors of gospel music is KWFC in Springfield and behind the controls is Kyle Dowden. I sat down with Kyle and asked him about life on the air in Springfield.

**Vonda Easley: What is your current radio position, station, and station website?**

Kyle Dowden: I am the program director for KWFC (Southern gospel) and KWND (Adult Contemporary Christian) in Springfield, Missouri. Website: [kwfc.org](http://kwfc.org) and [88.3thewind.com](http://88.3thewind.com)

**Easley: At what age did you know you wanted to work in radio? Why?**

Dowden: I never planned on a career in radio. I went to Southwest Missouri State University (now Missouri State) to become an astronomer. It turns out that physics wasn't my best subject, so I ended up getting a degree in mathematics. But in 1993, I needed a job to help me get through college, and saw an opening for a local children's radio station. That sounded like an easy enough gig for a college kid, so I went in for an interview, only to be told that I didn't have any experience for their small AM station. It was the truth. But a couple of weeks later, I heard that an AM/FM combo was getting ready to flip the AM from country to southern gospel, and they were hiring. Fortunately, they weren't as picky, and at 19 years of age I began my radio career at KCMG in Mountain Grove, Missouri.

Two years later, I took a job at KWFC in Springfield,

and became program director in 2004. I've tried to leave radio several times, but God has had different plans. Today, I program two stations reaching over 100,000 people in southwest Missouri and northwest Arkansas, and co-host one of the most popular morning shows in our area.

**Easley: Will you share your testimony with us?**

Dowden: I grew up going to church. I was always exposed to the gospel. And, at age five, I accepted Christ as savior. In my teenage years, I became involved in service and leadership within my church – serving on the audio tech team for services, and in the leadership of my youth group. Several years later, I became involved in the leadership at the church my wife and I attended in Springfield, and eventually became a deacon in that church. In 2007, I answered a short-term call to preach, and became an associate pastor of a small church in Springfield, where we served for 18 months. In 2012, we became the children's pastors of a church plant. Today, my wife and I serve in the food pantry at James River Church in Springfield.



**Easley: Tell us about your family. Wife? Kids?**

Dowden: My wife, Rebekah, and I will celebrate 24 years of marriage this fall. We have three boys, Jeremiah (a sophomore at Missouri State), Jonas (freshman in high school), and Malachi (seventh grade).

**Easley: What is your favorite restaurant?**

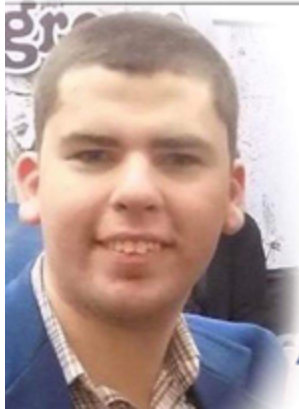
Dowden: Cheddars would be my favorite. Be it baby back ribs or salmon, my wife and I love going there.

Thanks to Kyle Dowden for answering our questions as we placed him under the DJ Spotlight. Be sure to tune into KWFC in Springfield, Missouri for good Southern gospel music.

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# YOUNGER PERSPECTIVE

## Canaan Coffman

BY ERIN STEVENS

We've got a 16 year old in the house, folks. Today, let's center our attention on a girl whose poise and talent go far beyond her years. I present to you, Miss Canaan Coffman.

Erin Stevens: How old were you when you stepped on stage the first time? It's no secret you were born with a microphone in your hand.

Canaan Coffman: I was about four years old when I stepped on stage. My parents were singing and I just jumped right in there with my mom singing, "Four Days Late." It's pretty comical. I remember that I got up there, grabbed the mic out of my mom's hands, and said, "Look people. I'm gonna sing you a song."

Stevens: I've heard that you are quite the bookworm. What are some of the reads you're indulging in this year? Any recommendations you'd like to give?

Coffman: It's funny you ask, this year has been a bit of a reading slump for me. But I did just recently order some books to try and kick back into it. Besides other genres of fiction, I like to keep on the hunt for Christian novels that are actually good. I know, I know, that's harsh. I also love some good "out-there" fiction like sci-fi and fantasy. If I could give a good Christian book recommendation it would be "Redeeming Love" by Francine Rivers. This story is historical fiction based on the book of Hosea in the Bible.

Stevens: Being that you are the official 16 year old in the house, are there plans to make you the certified driver for the Coffmans?

Coffman: Absolutely not. I would like to make it to our bookings alive, thank you.

Stevens: Makeup or no make up days? In store or online shopping? Decadent or savory snacks? Messy or organized? High heels or flip flops? Adventurer or planner?

Coffman: I love makeup, but spend more days without it. In-store shopping gives me anxiety. Decadent snacks are

my go-to. I can't end the day without some form of chocolate. Everyone who knows me would say I'm messy, but I know where everything is. I definitely feel more confident in a pair of heels any day. They don't really hurt, either. I have an adventurer's heart, but with our busy schedule, and me only having my permit, I'm forced to be a planner.

Stevens: What is the craziest, most bizarre thing a fan has ever said to you?

Coffman: Well, I have had people tell me I sound like a Disney princess. It makes me giddy every time.

Stevens: Is there something specific the Lord has been teaching you through your devotions recently that you would be open to sharing with the readers?

Coffman: Have you noticed how hard the devil has been fighting the people of God lately? Everywhere I turn I see friends, families, and other groups in this community under attack. And believe me, The Coffmans aren't exempt. If I told you some of the things we've been through, some readers might not believe it. I feel like God is on the move in a mighty big way, and the church needs to get prepared. When I read my Bible at night, verses have started popping







out to me about having the devil under my feet, walking in authority, and getting ready for what is to come in order to fulfill God's call. If I could share anything with readers, it would be to press on. You may feel caught in a battle right now, but I'm right there with you. You have to keep going because God is on the move.

Stevens: Growing up in ministry can come with its own set of challenges. How do you maintain a heavenly perspective in the midst of an Instagram world filled with teenage drama?

Coffman: If you follow people who make you feel sad, insecure, or jealous, stop it. Nobody is forcing you to keep up with people who put you down. In this "Instagram World," as you say, it's easy to fall under the trap of thinking that what people present to the public eye is all that goes on in their life. Nope. They are all going through struggles of their own that you don't know about. I used to go through the

constant mind battle of "I'm not as pretty as them," "They're more fit than I am," "They have more material possessions than me," etc. It consumed me. I had to realize that whether I followed that person or not, the world will go on, and I would feel better about myself. I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and I had to start treating myself like it.

Closing thoughts from Erin Stevens...

You were meant to stop by today. Miss Coffman's words were exactly for someone out there, I am sure of it. Are you beaten down on every side, feeling less than and inadequate? Are you looking on longingly at others' lives you think are better than yours? We weren't ever meant to play the comparison game. Remember the words of 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light." Did you catch that? YOU are God's special possession, so keep on shining HIS wonderful light.

And that's my take on it.

Until next month, Scoops fans.

Connect with Erin via Social Media:

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# Flatt Lonesome's

## Kelsi Robertson-Harrigill



**By Cheryl Smith**

Energetic bluegrass band, Flatt Lonesome, began in 2011 when the family band of Sandy Creek Revival came off the road. The band consists of Kelsi Robertson-Harrigill on mandolin and her siblings Buddy (guitar) and Charli (fiddle) Robertson, as well as Kelsi's

husband Paul (banjo) and friends Michael Stockton (dobro) and Dominic Illingworth (bass).

Flatt Lonesome won their first IBMA award in 2014, named Emerging Artists of the Year. They have released three albums, garnered six charting singles, made several Grand Ole' Opry appearances as well as on Daystar Television Network's Gospel Music Showcase with Guy Penrod. The group was nominated for IBMA's Gospel Recorded Performance for "In The Heat of the Fire."

Cheryl Smith talks to Kelsi Robertson-Harrigill of Flatt Lonesome.

Cheryl Smith: What was life like growing up as a preacher's kid?

Kelsi Robertson-Harrigill: Life as a preacher's kid (PK), for me, was wonderful. You hear horror stories of PK's and how they grow up with a nonexistent father, or how they're rebellious, etc. However, my father was very much present. We were his first priority and he made sure we knew that. He did not put us on a pedestal for which other people could compare their children,







which saved us from much affliction. I grew up loving church and everything associated with it and I still do.

I was saved on November 23, 1999. I was nine years old and I was saved after church on a Sunday night. My dad led me to the Lord.

Smith: Looking back over your life thus far, what do you identify as being a dark season?

Robertson-Harrigill: God has blessed me with a wonderful life, but from about age 22 - 24, I dealt with crippling anxiety. I went from extrovert to introvert, from confident to standoffish. I woke up every morning dreading the day, scared, worried...I was not myself for a very long time. I prayed and prayed for God to take the anxiety away from me and he never did. It took my dad reminding me that God never told us he would take away our burdens, only that he would carry them with us, for me to realize that I needed help. So, I started on a long journey of self-help, help from a doctor who wasn't only book smart, but Bible smart. I learned the hard way that you have to be willing to help yourself if you want God to help you too. And he did just that. God kept his promises, as he always does and brought me from the darkest valley in my life. I still deal with anxiety, but the bouts of it are fewer and farther between and I now have the knowledge to get through those times. God is good.

Smith: We have been so blessed by the song you wrote, "In the Heat of the Fire." Can you tell us the story behind the song?

Robertson-Harrigill: I wrote, "In the Heat of the Fire" during the difficult years of anxiety. I would sit on our balcony at our apartment alone, with my Bible and a guitar and read and sing any song that I could think of to give me hope (it's funny how in times of need, the

secular songs don't seem so great anymore). The doctor who was helping me at the time instructed me to read through the book of Psalms and as I read through that book I underlined every single time God said that He "hears" us, or "heard" us. I needed to know that God was hearing me because at the time I didn't feel like he was and I was desperate. During these times of reading and singing is when I wrote this song.

Smith: How did you and (husband) Paul meet?

Robertson-Harrigill: Paul and I met in Nashville, Tenn. We actually met for the first time at IBMA (International Bluegrass Music Association) and never spoke again until we saw each other again at SPBGMA (Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music of America), and then he asked Buddy for my number (how he got it, I'm not sure.) We started talking over the phone and visiting each other when we could (he lived in N.C. at the time, and I lived in Florida). We ended up dating for six months before we were engaged. We got married nine months later and now we have been married for six years and have a one-year-old son.

Smith: How has becoming a mother enriched your life?

Robertson-Harrigill: Being a mother has shown me just how much you can actually love someone. I love teaching Carter and watching him learn those things.



Smith: What advice would you most like to give to wives and mothers who wear many hats and struggle to find a sense of balance?

Robertson-Harrigill: My advice is that you cannot please everyone, but you can please God. So, when life



gets hard and you feel like you're hanging by a thread, choose God first and everything else will fall into place...and when your husband offers for you to go get your nails done, do it!

Smith: Who has most influenced you in your walk with Jesus?

Robertson-Harrigill: My parents have been my greatest influence in my spiritual life. Although they are not perfect, they have always been the same people behind closed doors as they were in public and that is critical for young people to see. Young people need consistency, spiritually and otherwise. My mother is the most godly woman I know. Her faith is unwavering and her love for my father and our family is something I can only strive for.

Smith: At the end of life, what legacy do you most hope to leave?

Robertson-Harrigill: When I am gone, I wanted to be remembered as a woman who did her best to please God, love her family and serve others.

For the rest of the interview, click on to [homespundevoations.com/2018/09/the-inner-views-of-kelsi-robertson](http://homespundevoations.com/2018/09/the-inner-views-of-kelsi-robertson)  
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# TOP 40

## CHRISTIAN COUNTRY SONGS

1. Daddy I'm Home - Gene Reasoner
2. Send The Rain - Kolt Barber
3. I Know The End Of The Story - John Penney
4. There's No Place Too Far From Grace - Tina Wakefield
5. Holding On - Reed Brothers
6. Living Proof - Wyatt Nations
7. Lord You Are Love - Sonshine Road
8. No Charge - Aaron Wilburn
9. Big Time Memories - Wade Phillips
10. Wonderful - Lisa Daggs
11. I've Seen His Picture - Byron Hildreath
12. He's All I Need - Steve Warren
13. Number One Fan - Hunter May
14. Daddy Prayed - Bobby Jones Family
15. I'll Take It From Here - Bruce Hedrick
16. Take Me Back To The Church - Cori and Kelly
17. I Am The One - Joanne Cash/ T.Graham Brown
18. Remember The Soldier - David Gresham
19. Cinderella - Trinity Wennerstrom
20. It's Gonna Be A Good Day - Christian Davis
21. I Saw The Light - Billy Dean
22. If The Bottle Was A Bible - Johnny Rowlette
23. Oh, My God - Jami Lynn Flanakin
24. Call On Jesus - Ronnie Horton
25. Coming On Strong - Cami Schrock
26. Don't Let The Devil Ride - Doug Corum
27. Sweet Whispers - Amy Richardson
28. Family Ties - Barbara Fairchild

29. Shine On - Jenna Faith
30. Drinking New Wine - Michael Lee / Daryle Singletary
31. I Got Saved - Michael Knight
32. Love You Like Mary - McKay Project
33. You Can Always Come Home - Steve Bridgmon / Allie Colleen
34. Take My Hand - Gunner Carr
35. I'd Settle For A Dirt Road - Chuck Hancock
36. Country As Cornbread - Shellem Cline
37. When Grandma Prayed - Appointed 2
38. Always Better - Kevin and Kim Abney
39. The Old Man Is Dead - James Payne
40. Just Because I Asked You - Gena Hamilton



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**By Selena Day**

“Women need women.”

I will never forget my girlfriend telling me this a little over 10 years ago. At the time I had three teenage girls living at home and I remember thinking she was just a little bit crazy. Many years have past and all three of those girls have left the house to make their way in the world and I have begun to understand her statement.

I personally believe that men need men as well. As we journey through our life, we need sacred moments to come together with those of the same sex as us, to gain wisdom, to get insight and to just know that we are not alone in our struggles with life.

I will never forget a conversation I had with an older woman many years ago while my girls were very small. We were in Nashville and Chuck had a meeting with some industry people and since the girls were so small, I had to wait in the lobby, trying to keep them from touching or breaking anything.

A woman leaving the office stopped to give the appropriate oohs and ahhs we give small children and asked, as many people did back then, if they were twins. I told her they were about a year apart.

Most people give me a shocked look when I get to that point, but she just smiled and said that two of her children were about two years apart, but when her youngest was about to graduate from high school, she found out she was pregnant with a late-in-life baby, and so

she had another one that was just a little older than my girls....I will give you older ladies a moment to gasp. I know, right?

We talked about the different challenges of having your children far apart or close together and finally, our conversation came to an end. She turned to leave, but before she exited out the door she turned back to me and said. “Aren’t you glad that God thinks more highly of us that we think about ourselves?” Once again I was reminded of how blessed I was to have those beautiful girls.

Her words keep my perspective clear and God trusts me with the season I’m in; whether abundant blessings or extreme difficulty, he trusts me to navigate through it and come out on the other side better for it.

Can you remember your first pair of high heels? My first pair was for my brother’s wedding, I was so excited to wear a long gown since I was going to be in the wedding. I bought the highest pair I could find, not having the experience or the maturity to know what I needed for the occasion. That day I stumbled, I faltered, and I ditched those shoes as soon as the ceremony was over. I don’t think I ever wore them again, but I learned who I was and how to carry myself.

Just because it was hard, I didn’t give up on wearing pretty shoes. I discovered what I could manage and when wearing high, high heels would be appropriate. Not at an outdoor wedding walking down a garden



path, that is for sure. If I had only listened to the women in my life, I would have realized that an outdoor wedding was not the place to be traipsing around with shoes too high and spiky.

Recently, we heard a pastor share the story of his father running track in high school during the depression and not having proper shoes. His father grew up on a farm so the only pair of shoes he had was a pair of work boots. He trained in those work boots every day. People thought he was crazy practicing every day in those boots. His father was a hard man, trying to raise 12 children during a time when there wasn't a lot to go around.

Day after day, his father watched him practicing and the dedication he had to run his race with the only shoes he owned. The son, not realizing his father was watching him every day, kept pushing himself to train in the clumpy inadequate boots.

On the day of the race his father went down to the general store and brought him a pair of tennis shoes. The father walked out on the field and threw the shoes at the son and said; "Now go win!" The young man won every event that day during the track meet. We never know who is watching us.

We need to surround ourselves with those who will call out our greatness, who will remind us of who we are.

Recently I sat with a friend before a network meeting and she asked me, "What should I say?" I told her, "Just tell them who you are." I reminded her of her accomplishments and she laughed saying; "I forget about all those things."

My husband is very talented, but there are times he forgets who he is and I tell him, "You need to be the man your bio talks about. Just be him until things start to work out."

I encourage you to value the people in your life. Seek out friends that who are willing to be transparent and real with you. I have always loved the model Jesus gave us. He did real life with a few, then he sat with the 12, and then he taught the multitudes.

Cherish all that come into your path, because we need each other.

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# The Pathfinders

## Twenty-five years and counting

By Charlie Griffin

### It's a silver anniversary jubilee

The Pathfinders were originally formed in November 1993, from the heart of a church choir; original members were Dearl Lemons, Dawn McGuire, Steve Griswold and Ed Grant. With the primary goal to sing as a church quartet, they soon realized that God had bigger plans and they began traveling throughout the southeast, expanding their ministry.

As with most groups, the travels increased in distance and number, and the group began to evolve, transitioning into a trio in 1996. Since that time there has been little turnover in the members of the group. Most notably were Greg Gainer (Mercy's Well) who was a member from 2002 - 2005, and Brian Dockins (Koinonia,) from 2006 - 2009. While Dearl and Dawn have remained a constant part of the Pathfinders ministry, the group's newest member came in 2010 with the addition

of Gary Russell.

"It is our commitment to our ministry for 25 years (that defines us,)" McGuire declares. "This is not a hobby, it is a ministry. While working full time jobs, we have been blessed to be a part of over 2000 worship services."

"Another defining attribute is our sound," states Russell. "Our style is described as 'southern-grass', which is a blend of southern gospel harmonies with bluegrass undertones. We are consistently complimented on our smooth, tight harmonies and that you can understand the words of each song."

The southern-grass Pathfinders have found their niche, refining their music as well as their efforts in the recording studio and on TV, regularly appearing on the





Great American Gospel and American Gospel Onstage. The group is poised to make an even greater impact on the gospel music industry in the future, with a number of recordings, television appearances and other broadcast venues scheduled as well as completed.

Now recording their silver anniversary album at Charlotte's Gat3 Recording Studios, with Danny Funderburk producing, the trio is creating a CD which is a collection of new songs, as well as some favorites.

"One of the most influential people to the development of the Pathfinders has been Danny Funderburk," asserts Lemons. "Danny was our original producer and continues producing for us today as well as being our friend and mentor. We have been blessed to work with the same musicians throughout all these years as well. We

have over a 20-year relationship recording with Glenn and Susan Tabor at GAT3 Studio in Charlotte, N.C."

After 25 years, what does the future hold for the Pathfinders?

"We definitely see ourselves continuing the work we are doing now for a long time," declares McGuire. "We don't ever want to get to the point that we can't go and sing in the local churches. However, we're going to go through every door that God opens for us. We don't want to lose sight of why he has called us into this ministry. It is our goal and obligation to spread the gospel to as many people as we can. We are honored that God has chosen us and placed us in this ministry."



In October 2018, the Pathfinders will be featured artists at Dollywood's Harvest Fest, as well as making their first appearance at Creekside Gospel Music Convention.

Lemons exclaims, "The group is really excited at the many events and activities that are showcasing our silver anniversary, (such as) Dollywood, Creekside Gospel Music Convention and Lowesville Concert Series, added to the many encouraging pastors scheduling engagements. These are events where we get to see old friends and meet many new friends. We are truly excited what God is doing with the Pathfinders."

Born in Charlotte, N.C. and with a family heritage in





bluegrass music, Lemons has a gift of being able to sing harmony parts. He has been serving God since 1993, doing what he enjoys the most. Lemons has never met a stranger, as he greets everyone with a friendly smile and a big heart. Dearl and his wife Brenda resides in Alexis, N.C. and they are the proud parents of five children and six grandchildren.

McGuire has been playing the piano and singing Southern gospel music for more than 30 years. From Craigsville, W.V., McGuire was inspired to sing and play by her grandmother. She is recognized as one of the top alto singers in gospel music and currently resides in Mt. Holly, N.C.

Russell studied music at Brevard College and Greensboro College and sang in several choral groups before joining the group. He is excited that he has been given the opportunity to sing Southern gospel music with the Pathfinders. Originally a native of Charlotte, N.C., he has served in the U.S. Marine Corp. Gary and his wife, Deborah, reside in Charlotte.

Throughout the years, the Pathfinders have had multiple charting audio releases, including several Top 40 songs on various industry music charts. Their current single release, "If It Wasn't For The Valley," written by Jill Blankenship, debuted in the top 80 on an industry chart. They are proud to have been nominated in several categories for the Diamond Awards, set to be presented at Creekside Gospel Music Convention, on Oct. 30.

The Pathfinders have traveled throughout the mid-Atlantic and southeastern states, appearing in churches, concert venues and festivals, as well as hosting a

memorable gospel music cruise.

In 2013, they extended their ministry internationally by performing at the Festival of Music in Perth, Scotland. The group shared the same message in Scotland as they do here, that Jesus is alive, he answers prayers, he petitions the Father on our behalf and we are saved by his grace.

After 25 years of sharing this good news, the Pathfinders are still going strong, singing their southern-grass harmony while uplifting and encouraging their audience.

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**This chart was compiled from a list of reporting stations. Each month we will be adding more stations.**

1. Sun's Gonna Come Up - The LeFevre Quartet
2. Beat Up Bible - The Down East Boys
3. Jailbreak - Joseph Habedank
4. The Cross Is All The Proof I Need - The Triumphant Quartet
5. Jesus Messiah - The Gaither Vocal Band
6. Power In Prayer - 11thHour
7. Washed By The Water - Jason Crabb
8. Beyond Amazed - Brian Free and Assurance
9. When I Wake Up To Sleep No More - The Old Time Preachers Quartet
10. Be Brave - The McKameys
11. Find Me Faithful - The Perrys
12. Rolled Back Stone - Greater Vision
13. Deep In My Heart - Legacy Five
14. What An Anchor - The Mylon Hayes Family
15. Meeting In The Middle Of The Air - The Tribute Quartet
16. Faithful - The Whisnants
17. Watch And See - The Erwins
18. Run The Race - The Hyssongs
19. Living In The Middle Of His Will - Sunday Drive
20. Be An Overcomer - The Hoppers
21. Anything Less - The Taylors
22. Don't Underestimate God's Grace - The Kingsmen
23. Jesus, What A Wonderful Name - The Williamsons
24. Love, Love, Love - Gordon Mote
25. If Church Pews Could Shout - Gold City

26. Woke Up This Morning - The Guardians
27. Broken People Like Me - The Old Paths
28. You Better Get Right - The Jordan Family Band
29. There Is Nothing That He Cannot Do - New Ground
30. Treasures In Heaven - The Mark Trammell Quartet
31. Open Invitation - Exodus
32. Freedom Don't Come Easy - Debra Perry and Jaidyn's Call
33. I Can't Explain It - Dean
34. Be An Overcomer - The Hoppers
35. Mount Testimony - The Lore Family
36. Grab Your Umbrella - The Talleys
37. Love At First Sight - The Pruitt Family
38. Every Moment, Every Mountain, Every Mile - The Williamsons
39. Running - The Martins
40. Lily Of The Valley - Josh and Ashley Franks
41. I'm Gonna Wish I Had Worried Less - Mark Bishop
42. When He Says Arise - Answered Prayer
43. Back to My Senses - The Arenos
44. Standing In The Storm - The Sharps
45. Let Me Take You To The Cross - Ivan Parker
46. I Want To Be The One - Tim Livingston
47. The Calm At The Center Of My Storm - River's Edge
48. The Return - Soul'd Out Quartet





49. Even If - John Whisnant
50. What Jesus Did For Me - The Walkers
51. Give Your Smile Away - The Wilbanks
52. Silhouette - The Wisecarvers
53. You Never Cease To Amaze Me - Sacred Calling
54. I Know You - The Sheltons
55. Lost - The Jim Brady Trio
56. Grace, Mercy, And Love - 3rd Row Boys
57. Longing For Home - Ernie Haase and Signature Sound
58. Looking Through The Eyes Of Love - The Ferguson Family
59. Choose Happy - Tim Lovelace
60. I Know I'll Be There - Karen Peck and New River
61. The Ground Is Level - The Bibletones
62. Another Day - Sisters
63. Don't Look Back - The Rochesters
64. Saved - Hazel Parker Stanley
65. What A Day That Will Be - ReJeana Leeth and New Grace
66. What Kind of A Man - Surrendered
67. Not In This House - Lindsay Huggins
68. The Old Gospel Ship - Chronicle
69. All My Hope - The Dodrills
70. Let My Light Shine - Zane and Donna King
71. I Believe – Bros.4
72. You Can Get There From Here - MARK209
73. Coming On Strong - Cami Shrock
74. He Can't Follow Me Home - Barry Rowland and Deliverance
75. Because Of The Blood - The Shireys
76. There's A Way Back - The Mark Dubbeld Family
77. Peace Is On The Way - The Old Paths
78. Remember That He Loves You - Doug Anderson
79. Resurrection And The Life - Rachael Gill and Redeemed

80. The News Is Out - Georgia
81. I Just Want To Talk To You Jesus - The Barber Family
82. Always Better - Kevin and Kim Abney
83. Freedom - The Liberty Quartet
84. I'll Never Turn Back - The Common Bond Quartet
85. Come Go With Me To The Well - The Stephens
86. The Sermon - Misty Freeman
87. There Is A God - Summit Trace
88. The Fight - Battle Cry
89. Small Lonely Hill - Matt Felts
90. He Is The Only One - The Dixie Echoes
91. Go Tell - The Perry Sisters
92. By The Touch Of Your Hand - The Messiah's Call
93. Before You Change The World - Lindsey Graham
94. If It Wasn't For The Valley - The Pathfinders
95. It's A Good Life - 2nd Generation
96. Just Wait - The Isbell Family
97. Do It By The Book - David Staton
98. Broken Things - Avery Road
99. I'll Take It From Here - Bruce Hedrick
100. Yes He Did, Yes he Does, Yes He Will - The Master's Voice



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# BJ Pons

## Showcase Your Grace



By Dixie Phillips

BJ Pons has been singing for the Lord since she was barely five. If anyone was paying attention on the day she was born in KenSINGton, Pennsylvania, they might have recognized the subtle hint heaven provided about the musical gift God was giving her.

BJ's parents were talented vocalists and her father was a preacher, but in the midst of this ministry home was a broken-hearted little girl with lots of "hidden secrets." BJ was the victim of molestation and had to deal with it until she was 16. At that time she spoke with a teacher and was immediately placed in foster care for a year.

God didn't waste one bit of her pain. He used it to catapult her into a ministry that would bring healing to many who have experienced similar pain. She wasn't just born to sing—she was born to sing under the anointing and lead others to the freedom they can have in Christ.

"I always knew God had a purpose for my life, but I wasn't sure how it would work out," shares BJ. "I was still overcoming issues from my abusive past and didn't really think I was good enough for the Lord to use. But I told him if he opened the doors for me to sing I would only use my voice for him. A short time later I felt God leading me to move."

At 19, BJ packed her belongings and moved to Louisiana. She joined Jimmy Swaggart Ministries and the Family Worship Center where she ministered for more than 20 years as a soloist, worship leader, and a background vocalist for their weekly Christian television program. She knew she was doing what she was born to do. Testimonies came pouring in about how her songs were touching and changing lives—especially women who had been victims of abuse.

Six years ago, after more than two decades singing for





Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, BJ sensed God calling her to step out as a soloist and share her story. This wasn't an easy decision, but as soon as she surrendered to the call, ministry doors opened.

As BJ saw the impact her testimony had on the women attending her concerts and conferences, she decided to write a song just for them—an anthem that would rally their faith to believe that God could weave gold in every story, even if it included abuse.

The Lord gave BJ bits and pieces of a song. She contacted a gospel songwriter and shared how the Lord was opening up doors of ministry for women who have experienced abuse or domestic violence, but needed a song she could sing at her concerts that would encourage them to give their “hidden secrets” to Jesus.

The song, “Hidden Secrets,” was finished with help of co-writers and added to BJ's 2018 project “Showcase Your Grace.”

BJ shares, “This song is very dear to my heart because of the many different types of abuses I have come through. I know what it is like to be filled with shame and still put on a smile on your face so no one asks questions. I was good at covering up and making excuses for the abusive husband. I know it's not mentally or physically healthy for anyone to hold all that pain. I really want people to hear the message of this song and find freedom by casting all of their past and present

pain on Jesus.”

“Showcase Your Grace” is getting rave reviews. Fans and gospel music professionals believe this is BJ's finest recording yet and BJ believes it, too.

“God has had his hand in every aspect of this project—from the writers to the producers,” states BJ. “I believe people will find physical, mental, and emotional healing through this album. This album takes you on a spiritual journey, letting the listeners know that when you let God take the lead, you will find your way through any storm. I have so many favorite songs on this album!”

BJ's ministry has taken her to various corners of the world, including Canada and The Netherlands. She has sung to thousands and been the featured artist on Bob Gass' Breakfast Show, Carl Brown Ministries in Louisiana, Jesus Connection in Georgia, Channel 40 in Pennsylvania, and the well-known Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York.

This beautiful lady has been honored to share the stage with other gospel artists such as Nancy Harmon, Janet Pascal, Laverne and Edith Tripp, Mary Sloan, Roni Goss, Archie Dennis, and Candi Staton Suswell.

“I get just as excited when the door opens for me to minister at women's shelters and prisons as I do when I am invited to minister at large women's conferences,” confesses BJ. “I believe every person is important to



God and no matter where they are at God says to go to them and share the Good News of Jesus Christ. My desire is to see this ministry expand in every way. I want to share with them that if God can use me and if he can use the woman at the well, he can use them. I have a burden for girls coming out of human trafficking. I want to let them know God has a special place in his heart for them—just like he did the woman in the Bible who washed our Lord's feet with her tears. I want to let these young girls know they do not have to have a label of shame placed on them. This is an opportunity for God to showcase his grace in their lives."

BJ has experienced God showcasing his grace in her story and she will be the first to share that God's stories never end in ashes. She has discovered just the opposite; the most amazing grace stories rise from the ashes and become a trophy of God to showcase his grace.

Readers can purchase BJ's music and learn more about her ministry at [www.bjministries.com](http://www.bjministries.com).

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# Randall Reviews It - October 2018

by Randall Hamm

Dear Friends:

October, the 10<sup>th</sup> month of the year and oh, so close to Thanksgiving and Christmas. Also a time of tricks and treats. From this reviewer, no tricks, just treats.

Three great CD's now available: the Steeles are back with "Legacy," a family group, the Wisecarvers, with their best CD yet, "Silhouette," and a soulful group returning to their roots, Three Bridges, and a new CD on their former label, Sonlite, "Our Story."

As always, if you enjoy the reviews, pick up this music, or download it, wherever you get good gospel music.

Please send your latest releases for review to Randall Hamm, c/o Q-100 WFLQ-FM, P.O. Box 100, French Lick, Ind., 47432.

Let's not dilly, let's not dally... let's get right to the reviews...



**The Steeles**

**"Legacy"**

2018 Independent

Producer: Brad Steele

Songs: "Never Changes" (Brad Steele - Jeff R. Steele); "We Call You Father" (Brad Steele - Jeff R. Steele BMI); "Just Across The River" (Brad Steele - Jeff R. Steele BMI); "Love That Won't Stop" (Jeff R. Steele BMI); "Blessed Be The Name Of The Lord" (Jeff R. Steele - Ricky Atkinson BMI); "Oh, The Name Of Jesus" (Brad Steele - Jeff R. Steele BMI); "For Such A Time As This" (Jeff R. Steele - Cindi Ballard BMI); "Nothing But Jesus" (Brad Steele - Jeff R. Steele BMI); "They Cannot Stop Resurrection" (Brad Steele - Jeff R. Steele BMI); "Never" (Jeff R. Steele - Vonda Easley BMI); "Whispered Prayers" (Jeff R. Steele - Earle Galloway BMI).

The Steeles, Jeff and his wife, Sherry, son Brad, and Duke Cleghorn, are back with "Legacy," an 11-song set and a sound that never changes.



Speaking of “Never Changes,” that is their first release to radio. The God who “Never Changes, Changes Everything.” Hallelujah. What a great song to lead the CD off with and a possible No. 1 at radio. The last project “Prodigals,” the first in a few years, brought them their first Top 5 in a number of years with “Meet Me There.” The CD overall is a delight to hear and listen to.

I began playing the Steeles in 1995, when Brad was around two years old. Brad wrote six of the 11 songs on this project and produced the CD. All of a sudden I feel old, someone pass the Geritol please...

Since returning to full time Gospel music and still pastoring a church, the Steeles have been welcomed back to Gospel radio, like a comfortable pair of jeans. You can't help but love them.

Several songs on the CD are songs Jeff Steele wrote which were hits for other folks (like Tony Gore and Karen Peck,) “Blessed be The Name Of The Lord,” and “Whispered Prayers.” It's always good to hear the songwriters versions and how they envisioned them.

“Just Across The River,” features a Jeff Steele recitation. Some of my favorite Steeles songs have featured Jeff speaking. “Just Across The River,” is one of those; a song that talks about the loss of Jeff's mother.

Sherry is featured on “For Such A Time As This,” a great song of compassion and hope.

Overall, it is a very soulful CD. If you are a Steeles fan, it should be in your collection, or if you're just starting your Steeles collection, this is one you should start with. Other folks who contributed to this wonderful effort include Randy Miller, Andrew Ishee, Tommy Swindle and Dustin Jenkins. This CD would not be the CD it is without their help. From this reviewer, thank you. To visit the Steeles go to [facebook.com/pg/TheSteeles2014/](https://facebook.com/pg/TheSteeles2014/)

Strongest Songs: “Never Changes,” “We Call You Father,” “Just Across The River”



**The Wisecarvers**

“Silhouette”

2018 Skyland Records

Producer: Jeff Collins

Songs: “Begin With You” (Jordan Chase Wisecarver - Kaila Nichole Martin Wisecarver BMI); “Jesus To Me” (Kaila Nichole Martin Wisecarver BMI); “Best Of Forever” (Jordan Chase Wisecarver - Kaila Nichole Martin Wisecarver BMI); “When You Look At Me” (Kaila Nichole Martin Wisecarver - Tammy Wisecarver BMI); “Silhouette” (Kaila Nichole Martin Wisecarver BMI); “You Have My Attention” (Kaila Nichole Martin Wisecarver BMI); “Go Down Again” (Kaila Nichole Martin Wisecarver BMI); “Manufactured Smiles” (Dustin Heath Wisecarver BMI); “Love You Still” (Kaila Nichole Martin Wisecarver BMI); “Someone Else's Valley” (Kaila Nichole Martin Wisecarver - Tammy Wisecarver BMI); “Potter's Wheel” (Dustin Heath Wisecarver BMI); “Amazing Grace” (PD-Arr Dustin Wisecarver)

Brand new from the Wisecarvers is a 12-song CD, entitled “Silhouette.” I've been following the Wisecarvers since it was Dad Vince and the two boys, Dustin and Chase. It's now 2018 and both boys have married and Vince's wife is now part of the group that make up the Wisecarvers. Most of the music is penned by Kaila Wisecarver (Dustin's wife) and other Wisecarvers. It's a dandy of a CD and should be in your collection.

The first single “Silhouette,” is a gem of a song. We should show his love so bright that all the world sees is a “Silhouette.” Dustin Wisecarver told me he came up with the hook on the way home from a concert and told his wife Kaila. By the time they arrived home, Kaila

had written the song.

Other songs include “Begin With You,” with the theme that it might be our last chance to praise him, so we should the service “Begin With You.”

My favorite is “Someone Else’s Valley.” “Don’t get me wrong, I’m glad you’re blessed and happy, Just don’t forget someone else’s valley.” While we may be happy and glad, don’t forget that there is an opposite side of the coin that some may be experiencing.

From beginning to end, this CD is full of strong songs and wonderful messages of hope and strength.

Ending the CD is an instrumental featuring Dustin on harmonica doing “Amazing Grace,” and is a must listen. Overall this is the best CD the Wisecarvers have put together and could get them a possible Dove nomination. Visit the Wisecarvers at [facebook.com/TheWisecarversMusic/](https://www.facebook.com/TheWisecarversMusic/)

Strongest Songs: “Silhouette,” “Someone Else’s Valley,” “Potter’s Wheel”



**Three Bridges**  
“Our Story”

2018 Sonlite Records  
Producer: Tre’ Corley

Songs: “Count It Victory” (Melvin Williams - Castro Coleman ASCAP); “Down The Road To

Damascus” (Glen Bates - Glen E Ashworth ASCAP); “My Story” (Michael Weaver - Jason Ingram ASCAP); “Good News Never Gets Old” (Dixie Phillips - Bev Herrema - Kristi Fitzwater - John D Rowsey ASCAP); “Like Jesus Did” (Richard Scott Jacobs, Jr. BMI); “Faith Shines Brighter” (Dixie Phillips - Belinda Smith - Sue C. Smith BMI); “Live The Gospel” (Marty Funderburk - Gina Boe BMI); “God Did It” (Evelyn Turrentine Agee BMI); “Nothing But” (Brandon Todd Wright BMI); “Gonna Keep Livin” (Ronny Hinson BMI); “The King Of Love My Shepherd Is” (Henry W. Baker - Spencer Peppard - Brandon Todd Wright BMI).

Back around 2001, a single was released by three wonderful gentlemen, known as Three Bridges. The song, “Dear Captain,” had been released by Chele (Sterban). Elliot had heard it and asked if they could cut it. This was around the time of 9/11. What followed soon after was what I called Blue-Eyed gospel. With a sound reminiscent at times of the Righteous Brothers with Mitchell Jon at lead, they soon conquered the Southern gospel world with their brand of gospel.

They left Sonlite Records a few years back, and now have returned to the label where they had their hits. They are also returning to a certain sound, the sound that ‘brung’em to the dance,’ and so Three Bridges is back with “Our Story.”

Today’s line up featuring group owner Elliott McCoy, along with Shannon Smith and Jeremie Hudson, both formerly of the Imperials, still have that Blue-Eyed gospel sound. From the first song to the last, the gospel presented Three Bridges style.

The first release “Good News Never Gets Old,” is a highly infectious, toe tapping, hummable track that will never leave your ear. It will leave you wanting more, like “Count It Victory,” and “Down The Road To Damascus,” all sung in that Three Bridges infectious style.

A great first effort back at a label that first brought us Elliott and the boys. Visit Three Bridges at [facebook.com/3BridgesMusic/](https://www.facebook.com/3BridgesMusic/)

Strongest Songs: “Good News Never Gets Old,” “Down The Road To Damascus,” “Gonna Keep Livin”





## FINALLY HEARING BRIAN FREE AND ASSURANCE WORTH THE WAIT

### Acclaimed group delivers a night of pure gospel

By John Herndon, Kentucky Sings.com

Finally, I got to hear Brian Free and Assurance in concert.

It seems odd that someone who loves gospel music as much as I do had not seen one of the most acclaimed groups of our day before their appearance at Sand Spring Baptist Church, on Aug. 30.

It was well worth the wait. And more.

Let's just say everything I had read about BFA (Brian Free and Assurance) was on target. These guys can flat out sing — of course, you knew that already — and those tight harmonies underscored why the group has won nearly every award in the gospel music industry over the last 25 years.

I have a hearing impairment, corrected by cochlear implants, so I rarely went to concerts for about 20 years. Now that I have implants in both ears, I make as many as I can. In addition, BFA's appearance at Sand Spring was its first, which is also a bit of a quirk, given the number of high-quality concerts Larry Briscoe and company bring in every year. But it happens.

I was keenly aware of Brian Free and Assurance, though. Their music is often on some of my Pandora channels and some of my favorites include, "What a Beautiful Day (for the Lord to Come Again)," and "Calvary's Cry." So I made the short trip to Sand Spring expecting something outstanding.

It was. From the time the Capital City Boys, of Frank-

fort, Kentucky, opened the night of worship, until Brian delivered a powerful invitation to accept Christ, it was a night with the focus on Jesus Christ.

Brian Free graciously took a few minutes after the concert to talk about a ministry that plays over 200 dates a year. It's a ministry that seeks to reach the lost while challenging and edifying the saved.

Sand Spring's 900-seat worship center was almost full on a late summer Thursday night. Free believes it is



because the gospel message is still relevant in 2018.

"Christians are seeing so much. We are seeing so much every day," says Free. "We see the shape our country is in today. What is going on is we are praising God and having church. We need to take advantage of that at every opportunity."

Free cherishes the opportunity to sing the many powerful hits, including Rosie Rozell's great "Oh What A



Savior,” and some of BFA’s signature songs, “He Will Carry You,” and “For God So Loved.”

In a career that has spanned 38 years, the last 25 with his own group, I wondered if Free would have one favorite song. “There have been so many,” he smiled. “God has blessed us with so many great songs, but if there was one, it would be, ‘For God So Loved.’”

“For God so loved that He gave His only Son

to suffer agony on a hill called Calvary

Heaven’s mercy reached my heart and bore my pain

Hope was born through sacred blood, for God so loved.”

(Words and music: Terri Franklin and Barbi Franklin. 1996. Published by Capitol CMG.)



Spending a couple of hours watching Brian Free and Assurance in concert, then talking with Free for a few minutes after the show, it was apparent that message drives the group.



Free got in the gospel music business by singing tenor for Gold City for over a decade. In 1993, he formed his own group and has watched many changes in the industry during this time. Bands have largely been replaced by recorded tracks and many groups, including BFA, have incorporated some newer sounds while staying true to the Southern gospel roots.

“Everything changes, but the message is still the same,” Brian smiles.

As lead singer, Bill Shivers, says on the group’s website, the mission, “is singing songs with a message. The message of hope, love, faith and salvation.”

Baritone Mike Rogers rounds out the group, which has received a Dove Award nomination for Southern Gospel Song of the Year with “He Can Take It.”

He can take whatever’s broken, make it just like new...

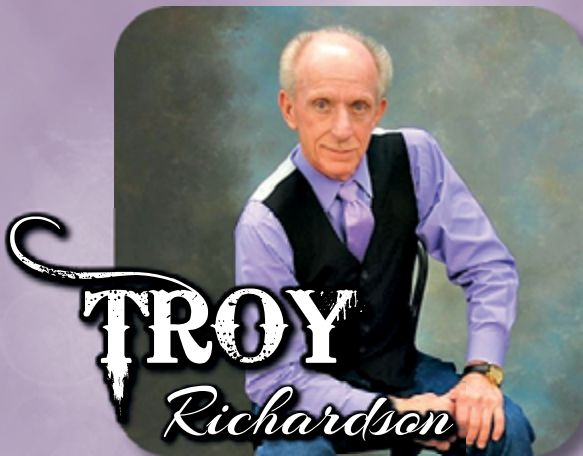
It is the message the awarded tenor tried to drive home with an invitation as he closed the concert. “We have the invitation at every single concert we do,” Free said. “I believe, how can you present the gospel of Jesus Christ and not give people a chance to respond to what they have heard.”

And you can be sure that when you hear Brian Free and Assurance, you are going to hear the gospel.

See more photographs by John Herndon at [kentuckysings.com](http://kentuckysings.com)



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# The Editor's Last Word

By Lorraine Walker

It is October and the wind is getting cool, the leaves are beginning to turn and sadly, the shorts and tank tops are put away for another year. Unless of course you are really brave. Up here in Ontario, we see people who simply can't accept that the seasons have changed, and they look pretty chilly!

We are thrilled to have Russ Taff on our cover this month. Craig Harris always does an excellent job finding a great story to share with our readers, and Taff's life being shown on the big screen does create conversation. Any of us might cringe at having our lives appear before the world, but Taff is sharing this for the glory of God. That's an inspiration to all of us, to be willing to tell our story of how Christ has worked in our lives. That's how we can reach our world.

Arthur Rice was interviewed by Justin Gilmore, as Rice is the Jerry Goff SGNscoops Lifetime Achievement Award recipient this year at Creekside 2018. I trust you have all made plans to join us this year at the Smoky Mountain Convention Center, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, from October 28 - Nov. 1. Jerry Goff will present the Achievement Award on Monday, October 29 during a special ceremony. Many of Rice's friends, family and colleagues will be on hand to participate in this unique evening. We hope you will be there too.

Canaan Coffman, our Younger Perspective artist as interviewed by Erin Stevens, was in the top 10 nominees for the 2018 Sunrise Artist Diamond Award. These awards are scheduled to be presented on Tuesday,

Oct. 30, during Creekside week. We are looking forward to a great night of awards and surprises, so be sure to join us.

All of Creekside week will be special. It will be extra special for my sister, Joan Walker, and myself as it is our first Creekside experience. Come on over and say hello during the week. Tell us your ideas about the magazine. We really want to know!

Most of all, if you have discovered the love of Jesus in our pages, we would be thrilled to hear from you. Write to me at [lorraine@sgnscoops.com](mailto:lorraine@sgnscoops.com).

If you are finding it hard to shift into a new season, either metaphorically or literally, remember that God never changes, he is always with you and his plans for you are to give you hope and a future. You can trust him, regardless of the weather.





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## SGN SCOOPS



Rob Patz is the President and CEO of Coastal Media Group. Rob has an 18 year history in radio hosting the nationally syndicated radio show, "The Southern Styles Show" since its beginning in 1993. Rob is also the owner of the internet's #1 Southern Gospel station, [SGMRadio.com](http://SGMRadio.com). In 2009, Rob Patz acquired [SGNScoops.com](http://SGNScoops.com), including the all- digital Scoops Magazine and the Diamond Awards. Rob has taken part in several Christian television projects working in front of the camera and also has helped create several syndicated television programs as well. Rob does voice work for various outlets including fortune 500 companies as well as emceeing concerts and special events. Email Rob at [rob@sgnscoops.com](mailto:rob@sgnscoops.com).



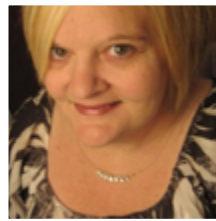
Stephanie Kelley is a public speaker and owner of Queen-O-Q, a blog featuring coupon match-ups, freebies, samples and information on frugal living. She is married, has three children and lives in Washington State. [Queenoq.blogspot.com](http://Queenoq.blogspot.com)



Canadian-born Lorraine Walker has a love for Jesus Christ, music and writing. The combination of these passions has produced artist features and monthly columns for Southern Gospel publications including SGM Radio website and SGN Scoops Digital magazine. Lorraine desires that the power of the written word will glorify her Lord and bring readers closer to the love, peace and majesty of the Almighty. Email Lorraine at [lorraine@sgnscoops.com](mailto:lorraine@sgnscoops.com)



Jennifer Campbell is a singer, songwriter, musician, and middle school English teacher from McAlpin, Florida. Along with her passion for teaching, she has an even greater passion for ministering to others, sharing her testimony of how she was born lifeless and how Jesus raised her up to live for Him. Jennifer is a member of the Florida Worship Choir and Orchestra and has performed with them at Brooklyn Tabernacle, Carnegie Hall, Central Park, and Times Square. She serves as a group leader for Women of Faith, designs websites, and writes an inspirational blog at <http://jennifercampbell.net/blog.htm> and a food and travel blog at <http://jennifersjourneys.net>. Learn more about Jennifer at <http://jennifercampbell.net> and [www.christwillreturn.org](http://www.christwillreturn.org).



Joan Walker grew up with music in the house and first heard Southern Gospel in her early teens. With almost a quirky (some may say 'weird') need to make sure words are spelled correctly and the apostrophes are in the right place, she enjoys proofreading the articles for the SGN Scoops magazine each month...and looks beyond the letters and commas to the wonderful words each writer has written. Joan counts it as a blessing in her life to be part of SGN Scoops!



Justin Gilmore, 22, a resident of San Diego, California, graduated from Point Loma Nazarene University with a B.A. in History in June of 2014. Passionate about Southern Gospel music and its history, he decided to venture into the blog world in January starting Southern Gospel Spotlight in order to share his love of this great style of music.

# Contributors

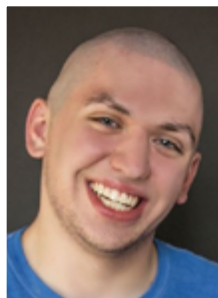
## SGN SCOOPS



Dusty Wells is a man of many talents and multiple skills, from his speaking engagements across the country, to traveling and encouraging various artists in the Christian music genres. Dusty has a passion that is evident from the moment you meet him.

Dusty is a man who remains passionate and secure in the calling and destiny upon his life. He has come to realize the importance of finding purpose and clear direction for not only his life, but also the lives of those he comes in contact with, no matter what stage of life they may be in. Growing up in a very dysfunctional home, surrounded by all types of abuse, Dusty had every excuse to be a failure in life. He grew up on welfare, having to steal his daily necessities of life at times, being surrounded by drugs, alcohol and pornography. He was raised by a mother who was married multiple times, living in a housing project on the wrong side of town. But in the midst of what seemed to be complete devastation, God had different plans of success for Dusty. At the age of 14, a precious couple took time out of their own lives to invest in Dusty...thus leading Him to the Lord. His life is a testimony of God's relentless love and deliverance, and is one of the most triumphant stories told in modern Christianity. Dusty is confident in the fact that if God can do it for him, He can do it for anyone, no matter the situation.

Dusty and his wife of 33 years have four children, and two grandbabies with one more on the way. They make their home in Nashville, Tn.



Justin McLeod is the founder of the Justin's World of Softball website, a site that he has built into one of the premier news outlets in the sport. Justin is a longtime Gospel music fan and enjoys researching the history of the genre, attending concerts, and reviewing recordings whenever possible. The son of a Southern Baptist pastor, he

also works for a law firm as a legal secretary and is active in his local church. Justin is a native of Memphis and now resides in Northeast Louisiana.



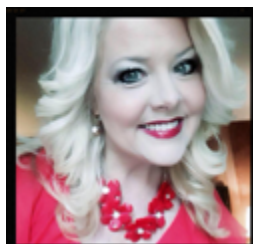
Pete Schwager is a web developer and graphic designer with a passion for Christ. He was born in Santa Rosa, California and moved to Oregon where he spent most of his life. He now lives in the quiet town of Ringgold, Georgia and

enjoys living in the country with his family. You can find him online at <http://peteschwager.com>



Staci Schwager helps with marketing and communication with her husband's web design company, Cre8able Media. Together they make a great team! Staci being the "talkative" one, loves being able to communicate

one on one with clients and organizing ideas. While Pete on the other hand is diving into the design and coding aspects to make the real masterpiece! Most of Staci's days are filled with preparing homeschool lessons for her kids, couponing, gardening, tending to her chicken flock and spending as much time on the beautiful, country land God has blessed them with.



Vonda Easley is the Vice President of Sales and Marketing. Vonda draws on a vast knowledge of Southern Gospel Music for her expertise in the field. In addition to her many personal friendships within the industry she also hosts a

weekly radio show which keeps her in touch with many of Southern Gospel's leading executives and artists. It also allows her a fresh view of new music and the latest happenings inside the industry. Vonda is also a group owner and manager as well! A self starter Vonda has started and managed several "new" events in Southern as well as "Country Gospel" Music. These events are fast becoming trend setters within the industry. She is a graduate of The University of Alabama at Birmingham.



# Contributors

## SGN SCOOPS



Robert York- During my childhood days my parents took me to the Atlanta City Auditorium for concerts hosted by Warren Roberts. That was the beginning of my love for Southern Gospel music. After 35 years I retired from USPS, during which time I got married. My wife and

I often went to The Joyful Noise for dinner and concerts. Every known name in Gospel Music sang there at one time or another. After I retired, we decided to start promoting concerts. Our goal was not only to promote our concerts, but also to promote any Gospel concerts in our area and attend as many as we possibly could. I came to a crossroads in December 2013 when my wife graduated to heaven, not knowing what to do. After much prayer God led me to continue promoting concerts. Have promoted around 100 concerts and can't tell you how many I attended. I still enjoy going to concerts and writing a little about the groups.



Erin Stevens is a uniquely talented shutterbug, singer, guitar player, writer, blogger, and social networker. She is the owner/operator of Photos For Keeps By Erin. Along with running her own business, she is the official photographer for Abraham Productions (API). You will find her behind the lens at all API events, along with

working behind the scenes on their social media. She also travels full-time on the road with her family's gospel group, The Stevens Family. Photography is her passion and singing for Jesus is her calling. For several years, you have known her as our very own "Younger Perspective" writer. Check out her photography website [www.photosforkeepsbyerin.com](http://www.photosforkeepsbyerin.com) and her ministry website [www.stevensfamilymusic.com](http://www.stevensfamilymusic.com).



Cheryl Smith describes herself as a "passionate disciple and follower of Jesus Christ." She says: "I am married to the sweetest, most patient man for over 30 years...Mama to one miracle son God sent to us after 12.5 years of infertility...Homeschool Teacher who learns way more than I ever teach. I love to spend time with my husband

and son in the mountains, sing and play Bluegrass music, and write. I am so thankful for your visit and hope you will visit my blogs: [homespundevotions.com/](http://homespundevotions.com/) and [biblicalminimalism.com/](http://biblicalminimalism.com/) It is my goal to encourage you in your walk with Jesus and to inspire you to let go of this world for the

sake of a higher call. It is His call that I hope you hear. So compelling, so intense, so far above anything this world has to offer. It is the call His disciples heard as they went about a normal, ordinary day, fishing. It is a call they could not refuse. A call that caused them to drop everything they had and walk away from life as they knew it, without a backward glance. Can you hear it? Are you listening?"



Hello, I'm Randall Hamm, Gospel Program Director of WFLQ French Lick Indiana, host of the Sunday Morning Gospel Show for the past 20 years on WFLQ French Lick Indiana and Singing News Top 10 Small Market DJ for the past three years. I now add something new to

my resume! Record Reviewer, ok... CD Reviewer. I'm Old School, having started in the days of LP's, 45's and Reel to Reel along with cassettes as the main form of music played. If you'd like to listen to my program, you can visit <https://www.facebook.com/TheSundayMorningGospelShow> and listen to archived programs, plus I post various Southern Gospel news updates, uplifting music and Gospel-related items. If you're in the six-county area around French Lick Indiana, in the heart of Southern Indiana, tune in every Sunday 6:00am-12:00pm and listen to the Gospel Greats with Paul Heil, 6:00am to 8:00am and the Sunday Morning Gospel Show with Randall Hamm 8:00am to 12:00pm.



After graduating from Middle Tennessee State University with a Mass Communication degree, Craig Harris has been in the journalism field for more than 15 years, working daily as both a photographer and writer at one of the largest non-daily publications in the state of Tennessee. He has experience in feature writing, news writing, action

photography, portrait photography, web-site maintenance and layout. Craig has been a part of numerous awards, both collective and individual honors in the journalism field. He has had articles published in numerous newspapers and magazines on a variety of subjects, most notably in the world of sports.

Craig's Southern Gospel interest dates back for approximately the same time span, having closely followed the industry since the later portion of the 1990s. He also performed for seven years with a local trio prior to joining the SGN Scoops staff.

# Contributors

## SGN SCOOPS



David's distinctive sound and his ability to blend perfectly with a variety of vocalists has made him a valuable commodity on live events as well as in the studio. His compassionate and gentle spirit makes him more than an artist, it makes him a great friend!

David began singing at age 6 with family. In 1990, he filled in for the Speer Family and later that year he became the lead vocalist for The Trailblazers. In 2002, Staton filled the lead position with Priority. While with Priority, the group was the resident gospel group at the Silver Dollar City theme park in Branson, MO and they performed for over one million people in one year. After the group disbanded in 1995, David continued to write for artists in many different genres of music while occasionally performing solo. It was during this time that his song, "Every Knee Shall Bow", recorded by Dottie Peoples, was nominated for a Grammy Award. His song, "Together We Can" was adopted as the national theme song to bring awareness to violence in schools. The music video (Together We Can) that featured many Atlanta based artists was shown at the 1999 Grammy Awards show, which helped launch the careers of artists like R&B's Jagged Edge, India Arie, and 4.O. In 2004, David partnered with Mike LeFevre to form The LeFevre Quartet. During the seven years that he was the lead vocalist, the group had many hit songs and won many awards. After leaving the LeFevre Quartet in 2011, Staton began working on a solo project and also began singing with Palmetto State Quartet. The group appeared on television and toured with country music superstar, Wynonna Judd while Staton was there.

Through the years, artists like Gold City, Jeff & Sheri Easter, Kingsmen, Singing Americans, Dixie Melody Boys, Imperials, Dottie Peoples, Ball Brothers, LeFevre Quartet, Palmetto State Quartet, Priority, Trailblazers, The Greenes, Ivan Parker, Brian Free and many more have recorded David's music. From 2005 to 2013, Staton was the Executive Vice President for Song Garden Music Group in Nashville, TN. In recent years, the National Quartet Convention has asked David to be a part of an industry advisory panel to help artists who need assistance and training. Not only has David made a mark as an artist, he is passing on his talent and knowledge to new artists, influencing and shaping the future of Gospel music.



Kelly Nelon Clark is the daughter of Gospel Music icon, the late Rex Nelon. As part of her father's group, The Nelons, she blazed a musical trail bringing a fresh new sound to the traditional Gospel quartet style. That sound and style influenced a generation of Gospel music performers and can be heard today in the styling of

groups like the Martins, Point of Grace, The Crabb Family and more.

As The Nelons broke new ground, the Gospel Music industry repeatedly recognized their excellence. The group won four GMA Dove awards as well as multiple awards from readers of Singing News Magazine. Kelly was named female vocalist of the year on four occasions and received favorite alto vocalist award 3 times. At one time, Kelly was the most awarded artists in the history of the Singing News Fan Awards. The music industry at large also recognized The Nelons with 3 Grammy nominations.

Today, Kelly currently performs throughout the United States, Canada and Europe with her husband and two daughters as The Nelons. The group is featured in hundreds of churches and concerts each year. The Nelons have been part of Gaither Homecoming concerts sharing their music with thousands of Gospel Music fans in sold-out arenas across the country. For more information, visit <http://www.kellynelon.com/>.



Paige Givens is a Christ follower, wife, mother of two boys and kindergarten teacher to 18 five-year-olds. She is a writer, reader, singer, studier, and teacher of words. Paige lives in Hayden, Alabama with her husband of 10 years, Chris Givens, and their sons Parker and Peyton. Paige loves to blog about faith, writing, music, and teaching. Her goal is to serve the

Lord by inspiring others to be who He has called them to be. You can listen to her music and read her devotionals at [www.paigegivens.com](http://www.paigegivens.com).



# Contributors

## SGN SCOOPS



Nathan Kistler was born on the road and was singing at the age of three years old. He has had the opportunity travel with groups like Southern Gospel's beloved trio the Nelons, and most recently for almost two years with America's Favorite family of gospel music The Hoppers. Nathan has had the privilege to be in 49 states and

24 countries singing about the wonderful story of Jesus Christ our Lord. He has also been a part of three crusades on the National Mall in Washington D.C. and while there, he had the privilege of singing in the Pentagon courtyard twice. Through his father's ministry in Washington, Nathan began his work on the Hill as a ministry partner with different Christian organizations like Faith and Action and more. Nathan is a missionary to Washington and continues to work there during the week while singing Gospel music on the weekends around the country and being an artist in residence at the American Mountain Theater in Elkins, West Virginia.



Selena Day is from Atlanta GA. During her twenties she worked in the field of fashion, as both a make-up artist and model. Selena became a Christian in her early 20's and then quickly met her husband, Chuck Day, who is a songwriter and recording artist. Selena and Chuck have been in the ministry for 26 years raising

three daughters and homeschooling them while they traveled together as a family. During this time God taught her how crucial intergenerational ministry is for the furthering of God's kingdom. Selena travels the world speaking at conferences with the emphasis on empowering a multi-generation of women to rise up and become everything that God has called them to. Encouraging the next generation of the church to break the walls of limitations in their mind and rise to their full potential. Selena and her husband are life coaches for The World Race, which is an extreme missions trip for adults 21 through 35. They travel every two months somewhere around the world to mentor these missionaries. She and Chuck have been pastoring a home-church for 14 years where they have experienced God moving in community and seeing the body of Christ in action through each other.



Derek Simonis began singing gospel music at an early age, around the piano with his sister,s at home and in church. His mother, an accomplished pianist and music teacher, was his inspiration to sing. Derek was saved at an early age due to the influence of godly, praying parents and a faithful Sunday School teacher.

Derek formerly served as a Youth Pastor and previously sang with Southern Harmony Quartet. For seven years, Derek also served as a Communications Repair Section Leader for the U.S. Army; he was member of the 1/160th SOAR (A) Night Stalkers and served several deployments overseas. Derek is married to his sweetheart, Jana, and they have two boys, Daniel and Avery. The Simonis family resides in Boise, Idaho. Derek and Jana travel and sing gospel music, having recently released their debut album, "Blessed." His life's verse is Romans 12:1 which says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Derek's ultimate desire is to give his all in the service of the Lord.



Logan Smith is a 20-year-old with a lot of miles behind him. At the age of three, he would stand in his room with a pencil as a microphone and one of his dad's handkerchiefs singing his heart out to one of the Happy Goodman's songs, such as "I Wouldn't Take Nothing For My Journey Now." At the age of seven, Logan was asked to

sing at a senior's dinner at his grandparent's church. Logan recorded his first CD, "The Journey Begins," at the age of 10 and his latest release, "Hits Before My Time," at age 19. In October of 2008, Logan was invited to sing with The Gaither Homecoming Tour in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina for Gaither Fest. Since that night, he has sung at many different venues with the Homecoming Tour. As of 2017, Logan has toured all across America, Canada, and has headlined two Norwegian tours. Logan is on the road more now than ever spreading the good news and has no plans of slowing down.

# Contributors

## SGN SCOOPS



Roger Barkley Jr. is an award-winning Christian artist and musical evangelist. With multiple charting songs reaching to the top 10, his goals remain the same: to win souls for Christ, use Gospel Music of any kind to reach the world with the Good News, seeing lives changed and being an encouragement to the saints. When asked about his

ministry, Roger said, "I can remember the first time singing with my dad playing the guitar and standing beside my mom when I was four years old. I have always loved all types of music." His vision is to lead as many people to Christ through preaching, singing, sharing testimony, comedy, drama and technology as possible. Having been labeled a Christian Entertainer, he believes it is possible to minister in an entertaining way, and in over 35 years of ministry has found that he can utilize all different types of music to let people know the love of Jesus Christ. Currently he is Artist-In-Residence with his wife, Dianna, and daughter, Chelsea, at Leestown Gospel Church in Frankfort, KY, and Redemption Road Community Church in Stamping Ground, KY where he leads worship when not spreading the Gospel across America.



Fayth Lore is a young woman from southern Ohio with a love for God and people. Although she enjoys chocolate, oldies music and spending time with friends around the bonfire, her passion is ministry. In January of 2014, after pastoring for 20 years, her family decided to follow God's call into music evangelism. In September 2015, they

launched into full-time ministry. The Lore Family travels the country, spreading the Gospel through songs, sermons and seminars. While Fayth loves to sing, she also has a heart for encouraging young women in Christ. She has spoken at various youth/women's events, as well as hosted her own blog for young ladies. To see more about The Lore Family, visit their website at [www.thelorefamilyministries.com](http://www.thelorefamilyministries.com). To learn more about Fayth's blog, visit [www.truepurposegirls.weebly.com](http://www.truepurposegirls.weebly.com).



Debbie Seagraves is a Gospel music soloist, songwriter and speaker from Hull, Ga. She and her husband, Mike have been married for 21 years and have five grown children, including four sons and one daughter that graduated to Heaven in 2009, as well as nine grandchildren. She loves singing, speaking, and writing her own songs. Debbie is

currently working on her third project. All of the songs on this CD will be songs that she has penned. She is an award winning artist, having won Female Vocalist of the Year with Lighthouse Gospel Music Association, and Female Vocalist and Soloist of the year with the GGCBA (Georgia Gospel Country Bluegrass Association) in 2016. She enjoys speaking at Ladies Events, sharing her testimony of how God spared her life from a near fatal motorcycle accident in 2011, how He brought her out of the depths of severe clinical depression, and through the death of her daughter in 2009. Also, Debbie is an avid Georgia Bulldogs fan and loves to fish, read, and spend time with her children and grandchildren. Debbie says: "No one can come as close as I did to dying and have it not change you. I am forever changed, blessed beyond measure, and just so grateful for every day that the Lord allows me to spend with those I love and to serve Him." She considers Micah 7:8 her life verse as she says that verse has carried her through some of the darkest times in her life. If you would like to have Debbie at your church or venue, you can reach her through her website: [debbieseagraves-music.com/](http://debbieseagraves-music.com/), on Facebook, or send her an email at: [fully-alive1956@att.net](mailto:fully-alive1956@att.net).

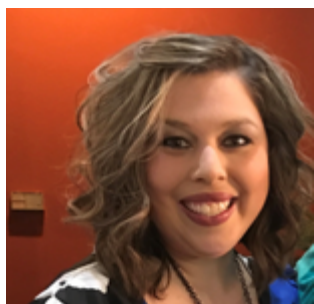


Jimmy Reno is from Birmingham, Alabama. He began singing in church at four years of age. Jimmy has sung with various groups over the years, until singing professionally for Mark209 and the Florida Boys. Jimmy is married with three children.



# Contributors

## SGN SCOOPS



Sarah Murray sings soprano for the Southern Gospel group Bless'd. The group is from Greenville, Tennessee and has been together for over five years. Sarah was born and raised in Jonesborough, Tennessee, but now resides in Greeneville with her husband, Chase. She has a

bachelor's degree in K-6 Education and a Master's degree in Human Resources Development. Her daytime job is being the Human Resources Director for a small company in Greeneville, Tennessee. Her passion outside of singing, writing, and crafting, is simply God's people. "I love the Lord and truly believe my mission in life is to reach his people, and that's both on and off the stage, behind my desk, and in my community. I just want people to see Jesus in me! I'm so honored to be a part of Bless'd and love our tight knit family group." For more information on Sarah, visit [blessdministries.com](http://blessdministries.com)



Kaleb Powell can be found in the small town of Greeneville, Tennessee. He sings baritone for the Southern Gospel group, Bless'd Ministries. Alongside Southern Gospel Music, Kaleb's passion is playing the piano. He started playing at the young age of 13 and for the majority, is self-taught. His style of piano

playing is inspired by artists such as Kim Collingsworth, Jeff Stice, and Gerald Wolfe. He has been singing and playing for Bless'd Ministries for the last six years.

Kaleb is currently the owner and operator of AKM of Tennessee, Inc., which is an organization that provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities. His life has been surrounded by taking care of others and for living out his passion through music ministry.

"I feel honored that God chose to give me the talent He did in playing the piano. I feel that if I can use this to serve Him more, I will perfect my talent to be used as only a vessel for Him. Being a part of Bless'd and traveling with our group is a lifelong dream of mine that I am forever grateful God saw fit to put together. On and off the stage, I want my talent to be only used for Him and to be a part of seeing souls saved." For more information on Kaleb Powell, visit [blessdministries.com](http://blessdministries.com).



Charlie Griffin is an avid gospel music fan, soloist, teacher and speaker. He is a staff writer for SGN Scoops featuring highlighting Southern Gospel Music history. You can follow Charlie Griffin on Facebook, Twitter or visit him at [www.CharlieGriffin.net](http://www.CharlieGriffin.net).



During his 40 plus year career, Bill has developed expertise in commercial banking, retail banking, sales and marketing, media, and financial consulting. After years of being bi-vocational, he was able to merge his professional expertise and his passion for ministry. Since 2010, Bill has been

helping churches and ministries with areas of operation. This includes financing (construction, permanent financing, re-financing). In addition, many organizations need help understanding how to market their ministries and how important it is to promote their ministries properly through media and social networking.

Over the past 40 years, Bill has become an accomplished gospel singer, having performed on 32 albums and produced over 200 albums for other performers. His extensive professional credits include singing with renowned gospel music groups including The Cathedrals, The Goffs, The Senators, and The Rhythm Masters, which performed four songs that reached No. 1 in the gospel music charts. In addition, Bill has received nominations for three Dove Awards and a Gospel Music News Award. He is also known for writing and performing the Gold Record winning song, "No Greater Love." Bill also performed in events led by Jerry Falwell, Pat Robinson, Rex Humbard, Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Dr. Paul Conn, and most recently, he performed with Governor Mike Huckabee.

Bill studied finance at the University of Cincinnati and vocal performance at the Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati. He also attended seminary at Tennessee Temple University in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and he holds a Doctor of Divinity Degree at Heritage Baptist University in Indianapolis. Currently Bill serves on the Board of Trustees for Davis College in Binghamton, N. Y.

# Contributors

## SGN SCOOPS



Suzanne Mason, a pastor's kid and native Californian, began singing with her guitar-playing father at an early age and spent her teenage years singing and acting with her youth group. She started writing personal poetry and short stories in junior high and hasn't stopped

since. Suzanne holds a bachelor of English degree from Columbia (N.Y.) University and has interned with both literary agents and a publishing house. While living in Chattanooga, Tenn., she began writing for AFrontRowView.com before joining the SGNscoops.com team. She enjoys sharing the love of Jesus through volunteering, music, writing, and teaching.



Jade lives near Nashville with her husband, Brent. She is a mom of two incredible children and two wonderful bonus daughters. Jade makes a living in healthcare and strives to make her life about serving God. She loves being deeply involved in the world of music that surrounds us. She believes

when words fail us, music speaks.



Dixie Phillips is a Dove Award winning songwriter. Her songs have been recorded by The Talleys, Gordon Mote, The Williamsons, Doug Anderson, Susan Whisnant, The Erwins, Jay Stone Singers, Master Promise, Three Bridges, Endless Highway, 3 Heath Brothers, Fortress, and many other gospel artists.

Dixie is also an Christian Editing Services Editor and Writer. She is an award winning children's author and ghostwriter. She has been published by Abingdon Press, Standard Publishing, Eldridge Publishing, Gospel Music Publishing House, and Guardian Angel Publishing.



Angela Parker is a life-long singer and sings with her mother's group, Mercy Rain. She resides in Lexington, S.C. She's been happily married to her husband Jack for nearly 4 years. He's supported every decision Angela has made without fail. Jack travels with Mercy Rain whenever he can and helps out where

possible. He supports Mercy Rain continuously. Since Angela has recently been diagnosed with Lupus, Jack has done everything he can to take care of her.

Angela actively advocates for Autism Awareness. She feels education for all involved is the key to their success. She worked with Autistic children providing ABA Therapy up until her current illness forced her to have to quit.

She speaks out against Domestic Violence having been a victim of abuse for many years herself. Her constant battle today is healing from the mental scars that are left over after the physical and verbal abuse. Her personal testimony will help others see how God can deliver from abuse and help to heal the abused person.

Angela is very excited about writing for SGNscoops and loves all of the SGNscoops family. She loves the Lord with all her heart and has been blessed with awesome talent and love for others. You will be blessed by her talent and great spirit!



John Herndon is a Kentucky native who was raised listening to gospel music. As a child, the Sunday morning routine always included the Gospel Singing Jubilee and his summers were filled with all-day-singings-and-dinner-on-the-ground listening to local groups just about every Sunday.

He remembers seeing The Prophets at his county fair when he was seven years old and eventually, he became a huge fan of The Oak Ridge Boys, The Imperials and J.D. Sumner and the Stamps.

John spent 20 years in the located ministry and during this time, he began writing local sports for The Anderson News in Lawrenceburg, Ky. For the last 16 years, he has been the full-time sports editor of that paper. John has won over 100 awards from the Kentucky Press Association, the Society of Professional Journalists and Landmark Community Newspapers.

He loves listening to gospel music or playing one of his guitars.

John lives in Lawrenceburg with his wife, Stephanie, and 17-year-old daughter. He has three grown children and four grandchildren.



# Contributors

## SGN SCOOPS



Amy Duncan Oxenrider, the daughter of Grant and Shelia Duncan, is married to Jason Oxenrider and they have three sons, Brady, Weston, and Rylan. Amy works as a psychometrist for the Mississippi Department of Education. She also writes for Pure Gospel Magazine and

is now a member of SGNScoops.

A former member of the Riders, Amy continues to minister through singing and speaking engagements. She is excited to see what her future holds and longs to uplift the name of Jesus Christ wherever the doors may open.