

Steven Fromholz – A Four Part Tribute

On Monday 26th May, a Steven Fromholz Memorial Concert will be held at Threadgill Theatre as part of the 2014 Kerrville Folk Festival. A reminiscence of the Memorial Concert will form the fourth and final part of this tribute to the late musician. A Steven Fromholz interview dating from 1986 constitutes Parts 1 & 2, the third part is a Biography including details of Steven's exploits 1986 - 2014.

Part 1 - A 1986 Interview

The interview with Steven Fromholz was conducted in Room 216 of the Y.O. Ranch Resort Hotel, Kerrville on the evening of Tuesday 27th May 1986. Steven had just played the interviewer, a tape of his latest recording, which at that time, was titled LOVE SONGS. The interview commenced as follows.....

I was born in Temple, Texas in 1945 - June 8th. I had a Texas mom, born in Kopperl, Texas - Bosque County, a small-town girl. My father was a Wisconsin guy, from Randolph, Wisconsin. A real sharp guy, named Al Fromholz, who was a major in the Army when they met. My mother worked at Camp Hood and they got together. I was born there because the war was still on. The war ended, and dad went to work for the Ford Motor Company. We travelled in the Mid-West from Wisconsin to Texas until, I guess, I was eleven years old. We always came back to Texas, when things got weird. I attended eleven different Grade Schools. It was fun being a kid, living in all those places. Being the new kid I quickly learned how to get to know people. I know a bunch of folks who are my age, who were raised in Airforce and Army families. One of my partners in Felicity Records was an Airforce kid. He went to sixteen Grade Schools - same thing - you're the new kid all the time. You've got to learn to fight, or you got to learn to talk (laughs) - and I come from a long line of talkers.



What was your first contact with music.

Both my folks sang real well, and I sang. My dad was a Catholic and mom was a Methodist, so we ended up Episcopalians. It was a pretty natural compromise. I sang in the choir at the Methodist Church in Kopperl, Texas, because my grandmother went to church every Sunday. We

went to church when we were down there, and I was down there a lot, as a kid. In the Episcopal Church in Des Moines and in Memphis, I sang in choirs there. They had real big churches downtown, and real big choirs. I can't remember if it was Memphis or Des Moines, but I had my picture in the local newspaper, as one of the top three choir boys. I love to sing like that. My older sister Angela also liked to sing - she had a different father, the same mom. Angela sang all the time and played great piano by ear. By the time I was five or six years old, I was already singing the current hit songs - Teresa Brewer songs and stuff. I would sing harmony with Angela. She cut records for Sun Records in the early fifties. She was Angie Bailey and sang country music on the Louisiana Hayride and Hayloft Jamboree and similar shows. She'd love to hear me say that. She

sang all the time and would have been a ballerina, but she was almost six feet tall. There wasn't much call for six foot ballerinas. She sang great - still sings great. The first time I ever saw a guitar really played in person, Angie played it. I sang with her all the time, probably from about five years old. I guess all of us who came from the country, sang in the churches. I came from the country and the city - it was a country-politan thing. The first time I ever performed in public was at the Grove School in Kopperl, Texas, and I sang *The Yellow Rose Of Texas*. I sang the shit out of it. That's where all that comes from.

How did you end up in Denton, Texas.

Mom and dad divorced, and I ended up back in Texas with mother. We settled in Denton. This was in 1957, and I was in the sixth Grade. I had met Elvis Presley, because my sister dated him in Memphis, Tennessee around 1954/55, just as he was starting out. His first single wasn't even out. He came to my house, and Angela dated him. When his first record hit Denton, I told my schoolmates about that, and they said "*Bullshit*," but it was true. That's just what happened, so I felt a kinship in that and I got off hard, you know, at twelve years old. My mother remarried, and the man she married ran a coin machine business in Denton. Coin machines being jukeboxes, pinball, drinks, coffee, candy and cigarette machines. I worked on jukeboxes from the time I was thirteen, till I left home at seventeen years old. I installed wall boxes in cafes. I bought the singles in Dallas - when *Everyday* was a hit (**ED. NOTE.** Initially *Everyday* was the B-Side of the 1957 Buddy Holly hit *Peggy Sue*) - I bought that record in Dallas from Big State Records and put it on the jukeboxes in Denton. I graduated high school in 1963. Denton, Texas that year was AMERICAN GRAFFITI - the movie - that was exactly what it was, right down to the kid getting killed in the car wreck - and the ladies fighting in the bath - the whole nine yards. The music was always there, and I heard all the songs when they first came out. I bought the damned records. In Ellison's Record Shop in Denton back in 1959, you could go down there pick your favourite platter go into the listening booth and play it. So I did. We'd be there during the afternoon, when we weren't playing basketball. I got to introduce other kids to these records, because I told my step-daddy what to buy. I bought them all. Once I could drive, I went to Dallas and bought the records. It was fun.

When did you start attending North Texas State College.

I went to North Texas State in 1963. I'd been going to High School in Denton, and married my High School sweetheart. The really big mistake she made was to give me a banjo for a wedding present. In the 1950's I was tuned into The Kingston Trio - they killed me. The Limelighters slayed me - I mean, they tore me up. Then I got into Clarence 'Tom' Ashley and Doc Watson and those guys. I was buying records out of PLAYBOY - I bought this big folk collection which, I guess my ex-wife still has. The box was about two inches thick and full of these old folk records. I also listened to Appalachian music and Erik Darling records. I wanted to play banjo, and so I got one - I even started playing banjo in bed. That's a bad sign. I bought myself a guitar around a year later, and that was the end of it. I went to North Texas State and although I didn't play with a band, I could sing pretty good, so I ended up President of the North Texas State Folk Music Club. My old pal Travis Holland attended North Texas State, and he has played with everybody from Michael Murphey, to me, to Jerry Jeff Walker. He was our guru for a long time, and still may be again. I hope he is. I met Michael Murphey there. I met Donny Brooks. The harmonica work you heard on my new tape that was him. He is currently a member of the band in the show BIG RIVER - the Broadway play that Roger Miller wrote the music for. I digress. Johnny Vandiver - the late great Johnny Vandiver who was brutally murdered in Houston. He was in that area at that time. From 1962 to 1965 we all played a lot of music.

You played for Rod Kennedy at the Zilker Park Summer Music Festivals.

I played for Rod Kennedy as a member of the Dallas County Outpatients, which was me and Segal Fry, one of our mentors - all of our mentors, plus Vandiver, Travis Holland, Donny Brooks, Murphey and a jug player named Ted Kak - a great jug player, with incredible endurance. **(ED. NOTE.** Initially I thought that by making a joke of the band name, Steven was playing down his involvement with Murphey and Fry in the Dallas County Jug Band. However, the Outpatients were mentioned in Kathryn Casey's article *Blues And Bad Blood*, in Issue 521 of ROLLING STONE magazine. The article focused on the brutal February 1985 murder of Vandiver and his girlfriend Debbie Davis. Vandiver was also regular performer at Kerrville, and Fromholz contributed to Casey's article). Prior to that, I was in the Michael Murphey Trio at North Texas State. It was the first truly organized singing I did with others. It was me, Patty Loman - beautiful girl - lovely girl and Michael. We sang on the green bean circuit. The cold grey meat, green bean circuit that's they have in Lion Clubs and Qantas Clubs - social functions like that.

Murphey at that point, then seemed to zoom off -

Well, he zoomed off. I'll give you the chronology on that. I ran away from home in February 1965. I filled my car with gas, threw in my guitar and headed for New Orleans. I left my wife and ran away from home at twenty years old.

Was your daughter Darcie around at this stage.

No. Darcie didn't arrive till later, with my second wife. I've had three of those. I'm married to my third wife at the moment. Darcie was born after I came back from New Orleans. I ran away, started to write songs, and lived in the French quarter with a pal of mine and his wife. I was drinking cheap vodka and being crazy. Listening to the blues at a place called The Dream Castle. Once I'd done that, I knew that music had to come first. It was music that took me away from home. It's what I wanted to do all the time. I didn't exactly know how to say that back then, or else I would have told my wife. When I came back to Texas, it was then, that the jug band came together. That lasted April, May and June. In July, I went to California because the band had broken up. Everybody had lost interest. We weren't making any money. It was just a wonderful, wonderful lark. Murphey moved to California and fell in with Randy Sparks **(ED. NOTE.** The founder of The New Christy Minstrels) and all those folks. Michael Nesmith was involved in that stuff at that time. Anyway, I moved out there. My mother was in California by that stage, leasing properties in Century City. I went out to live with her and worked for 20th Century Fox digging ditches for a while. I made \$3.39 an hour riding a jack-hammer. It was great work. I was dating this beautiful girl, named Penny Barnett. Late in 1965, I got my draft notice. By then I was divorced, so I joined the Navy. I didn't want to go to Fort Polk and join the Army, and go fight in Vietnam and get killed. I was in the Navy in California from 1965 till 1968. I spent the last year and a half of that in San Francisco. That is where singing in clubs really set in - and singing with other folks. For a time I had a duo called the Buffalo Chips with a gal named Judy Caldwell. I met Michael Williams out there, and he was part of Frummox for a while. Then he went in the Army, and Dan McCrimmon and I became Frummox. I was singing four nights a week, and was in the Navy five days a week. I got out early, because they thought I was crazy. I guess I was at that time, because I wasn't sleeping well. I must have been crazy. It was an honorable discharge, and then I began singing full time. I moved to Arizona for a while and wrote *Man With The Big Hat* while I was there. I wasn't there very long. Maybe February 1968 till May 1968. Then I headed to Colorado and that's when I really became a folk singer. I lived in Denver for a couple of years and in Evergreen



for two years. I also lived in Guadio for two years. Dan and I worked together from around September 1968 – we did some gigs, and became Frummox from October 1968 till May 1971.

Where did you meet Dan.

I met Dan on the third day I was in Denver at a bar downtown. I was just wandering around. By then I'd met Dow Patterson and Becky Patterson - Hondo Crouch, you're hip to Hondo Crouch? - Becky Patterson is Hondo Crouch's daughter. They were in the Airforce and living in Denver. Dow and Becky had known Mike Williams back in Texas. We went over to their house on the second night and hung out with them. Dan and Dow also knew each other. Anyway, next day, went to this bar and McCrimmon walked over and said, "*You must be Dow's hippie friends*" (laughs). So Dan started playing harmonica with me and Mike Williams.

You've been quoted in the past, as saying that McCrimmon was pretty shy on stage.

Yes, he was a stage shy person. He's not stage shy anymore, but he's still very low key. Unfortunately compared to me, everybody except Mike Williams is stage shy. **(ED. NOTE.** Here's a short Mike Williams history. Raised in Birmingham, Alabama post his army service he settled in Austin, Texas and performed on the local folk music scene. He founded BF Deal Records, and released his own albums and others by Bill & Bonnie Hearne and Nanci Griffith). Daniel had a softness and a gentleness about him that was very appealing. Our voices blended in a very funny way – they're nowhere near alike - they just blend in a funny way. We worked at it. We were together all the time, for a long time.

Where did the name Frummox come from.

Judy Caldwell, my partner in Buffalo Chips - we sang at the Drinking Gourd on Union Street, every Thursday night. It was a great joint. That's where *Texas Trilogy* was first performed in public. I wrote the song in San Francisco during 1967. Anyway, she thought I was clumsy and put Fromholz and lummoX together, and that's where Frummox came from. Interesting huh? (laughs).

After Frummox you continued living in Colorado.

I didn't leave there till 1974. I went to work for Stephen Stills during 1971. I had met Stills in 1969, I guess. We made the Frummox record HERE TO THERE. It was released in 1969 and included my *Song For Stephen Stills*. I sent a copy of the album to him and he called me one night in May 1971 and said, "*Come to my house. I want to talk to you.*" So I did.

Dick Weissman who produced the Frummox album, is he the guy who had been in a folk group with John Phillips.

You mean the Journeymen, with Scott McKenzie and John Phillips - yes, that's the same guy. The best banjo player I ever heard in my life.

Supposedly, he was more of an academic than a performer.

He is an academic, but he also spent - those early Philadelphia hits - the Bobby Rydell stuff. All that stuff that came out of Philly - that was Dick Weissman playing guitar on those songs.

And that's somewhat incongruous.

Totally incongruous, but Dick was this homely Philadelphia Jewish kid, who became a great musician. As a kid, he's playing on all those cuts. He went to New York after that and became one of the most sought after studio players there. He could play anything with strings on it, pretty much. A really great guitar player. Almost any style you wanted to hear. His forte, in my mind, was the banjo. He also produced lots and lots of stuff. He is a great musician, but he's very academic. He's a stylist and an artist, as well as an academic. Harry Tuft ran the Denver Folklore Centre and it was the first place I ever played in Denver. Dan and I worked for him. We played his joint, when he put on concerts. He had the most sought after little concert hall in Denver, or the West for that matter - well, the mountain West. He said, Weissman was the guy to produce us, so he got us together with Dick. We cut that record in August, so I guess we met Dick in July. We went to his house and just worked on all the ideas we had for the album.



The Texas Trilogy is an incredible song. Did all those characters really exist.

There really was a Mary Martin and a Billy Archer. They didn't marry, that was just me being poetic. The situation was there however, but the names were different. I went to school with those people. Billy Archer and I thought that Mary Martin was the neatest thing that ever walked the face of the earth. The situation occurred with different people, and I used Billy Archer and Mary Martin's names because they were so dear to me at that time. They just stayed with me - the situation however is totally real.

Going back to Stephen Stills.

I went off to play rock n' roll (laughs). It was an amazing experience. I went as far into that as you can go into the rock n' roll experience, and still survive. I loved it.

Did you appear on any of the tracks on the first, double Manassas album.

I think I have one rhythm track on the first record. I've listened to it. I quit the band because I was not making sense to me. I guess it must have scared me. I had to evaluate the priorities in my personal life. Janey, the lady who puts up with all my crap, was a lot more important to me, as was my sanity. It just didn't make sense to me, what I was doing. There was a 'rock' that I knew about, and I flew her down to see if that would make it better, but it didn't. It was just a situation that I was in. I had walked willingly into it, and would not change a thing, except perhaps do a bit more. I thought I had a good time. Eventually I'm gonna write my autobiography.

You toured with Stills though, along with the Memphis Horns.

We did twenty-four shows in fifty days. This was before Manassas. We went to England on 1st June 1971 and stayed there three weeks and rehearsed. Came back, and went to Memphis for ten days and rehearsed. Then we went out on the road. I was playing rhythm guitar and singing second vocals. Originally, we had a five piece band. When Joe Lala joined us, we started doing a six-piece rock n' roll set.

Who else was in the band at that time.

Stephen, myself and Fuzzy Samuels, who is an incredible bass player, plus Dallas Taylor the drummer and Paul Harris who is a great, great keyboard player. That was the five-piece band and

then Joe Lala joined us after a while, on percussion. We became a six-piece. Stephen and I did an acoustic thing together with two guitars, and after a while I started to do two or three songs on my own during the set.

Were these your own songs.

Yea, they were my own tunes. Stephen would come out and do a big piano thing - *America's Children* and stuff. Then the Horns came out and we ended with a thirteen-piece onstage, and we really kicked ass. We were great, when we were great. We were awful, when we were awful. We had some great nights though.

Backtracking to FrummoX, there's a comment on the liner of that first album, about staying in New York with Jerry Jeff Walker and his first wife, while you were recording the album.

Yes. I met Jerry Jeff in Austin in 1969. This was in early 1969, prior to going to New York. We were working down there, playing at a place called The Chequered Flag that Rod Kennedy owned. At that time, it was Rod's club. Segal Fry and Allen Damron took over shortly after that. Anyway, I met Jerry Jeff down there. He was a great help in New York, because Dan and I had never been there before - well, I think Daniel had been there once. We stayed in New Jersey for a while and hung out with Dick. That was in Roosevelt, New Jersey and we rehearsed and put shit together. Dick got Eric Weissberg to come in and play - all those wonderful players. We spent some great times at Jerry's house. We didn't have any money, and Jerry at that time, had a lot of money. Jerry and I together, could roar as hard you would want roaring done. If you wanted something roared, he and I could roar it for you. He could do it by himself, but with me - we could bring the house down. We drank all the ale we could in a bar on 65th Street one night, and then got thrown out for bitching, because they had ran out. That was lightweight shit. Jerry and I have been friends for a long time. We returned the favour when Janey and I lived in Gold Hill. He came up there on his birthday in March, two years running. He just showed up. His birthday is the day before St. Patrick's Day, and the celebration in Gold Hill was tough anyway, because there were some Irishmen up there. It's a little mountain town above Boulder. Jerry certainly added to the celebration - it was crazy, but it was wonderful crazy, and I was always pleased to have Jerry come up. We were up in the mountains. He'd come up and play some shows in March, in the mountains, at 8,300 feet - there's snow everywhere, and he shows up in a snakeskin jacket, that he traded Gordon Lightfoot out of. This was his warmth. He wouldn't move far away from the bed he was in, except maybe for the length of the cord on the electric blanket. Our outhouse was always out, and he had to go pee outside. It was fun. We'd just drink all the Irish Whiskey we could, and then go down to Denver and get an egg salad sandwich, to feel better (laughs). He returned the favour.



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And then you moved back to Texas.

We came back to Texas - I quit Stills in the Fall of 1971, crashed and bottomed out that Christmas. I ran out of money. I ran out of cocaine. I had damned near run out of friends. Janey and I decided I needed to play music, because that was what I did. By the following April, we'd packed. We had a house built on the back of the pick-up truck - a big house, built in there. We just packed up and gave away a third of our shit. Sold a third of our shit and threw away a bunch. We hit the road from April till September that year in that truck. I played my songs in Texas and travelled around. I played clubs all over. Went over to Arkansas and saw old Roger Hopps, one of my pals from the Memphis Horns. I played dates wherever I could. I sold a guitar

here and there, if I needed loot. Then I began hooking up with some Texas players who had wound up back in Texas. We were living in Evergreen by that Fall. I started putting bands together. Bands like Captain Duck And The Farmers Electric Co-op Boys, which was a little psychedelic country band. I also had a band called the Bluebonnet Plague, and played - this was just before progressive country hit, or scared us, or whatever that was. We played lots of music. Then I moved down to Texas in 1974, because the business was there. I hooked up with Moon Hill Management and cut with Capitol from 1975 onwards.

Going back a little, you cut an album for Countryside Records in 1973, but it was never released. Where had you met Michael Nesmith.

I'm not exactly sure how that came about. Larry Watkins was my manager at the time. He also handled Rusty Wier and Michael Murphey for a while, and B. W. Stevenson. He had a contact out in California and sent them some of my stuff. I was still living in Colorado, and working with management out of Texas. Michael came out to see me in Colorado, and we decided to make the record. He was working with Countryside Records which was part of WEA - Warners Bros, Elektra and Atlantic.

Jac Holzman was still there at that time.

He was the key. Holzman got kicked upstairs, or wherever they kick those folks. Michael, as they say in California, "*lost his powerbase.*" He got dumped and so the record never came out. I've got the masters. He sent me the masters. Michael is a gentleman. They'll never come out. I listen to them now and again.

I have a tape copy of that album and I think that it's pretty good.

It never had a chance to get mixed up right, and be taken care of right, because of all that was going on. Everything was shaking real hard and Michael didn't know where the hell he was standing. It was a really good experience for me, however.

Don't you think that it was the difference between Holzman being in control of a label, where the product had a degree of credibility, and the next guy who came along - David Geffen - having one objective in mind, which was making money irrespective of quality.

I'm not sure what it was. That was as naive as I ever was, making records. The Frummox record, I was not naive because I knew nothing, and knew that I knew nothing. A little knowledge is very dangerous. I'd actually known Michael since 1965. I'd met him when he was working with Randy Sparks - Randy had these '*farm troupes*' for those singers he had - the New Christy Minstrels. He had this '*farm club*,' which was called Leadbetters. When I worked for 20th Century Fox, \$3.39/hour was pretty good money for a twenty-year old kid. I went out a lot with my friend Penny Barnett, and we would go down there a lot. I heard a lot of folk music down there. I would listen closely to the songs they performed. My writing was really starting to change from being a student in College, writing funny, right-wing protest music. That was what I had been doing, because America was always right, and God was on our side. Once I had been out in the bigger world and saw more things and bigger things - not necessarily better - seeing that different stuff, my writing started to develop. I was listening to whatever I could hear. The Ash Grove was only down the street from where I lived in Los Angeles. I would go there and listen to the best bluegrass in the world. Everybody came through town, I had never had that experience before. Nobody ever came through Denton, and I didn't go to Dallas that much. There was a most definite change in my writing at that time.

Once you knew the Countryside album wasn't coming out, was that motivation to move to Austin.



I had a market here, and I could work out of here successfully. At that time, I could make a living in Austin alone - in 1974 to 1976, what with the progressive country scene. It was incredible. That's where it really happened. It didn't happen anywhere else in the country, for real, but it happened in Austin. It happened hard. Everybody was real, real high and real, real drunk and having the greatest time of their lives. Everybody was real young and real hot. The summer nights were hot and the girls weren't wearing many clothes. It was Austin at its best I think - the mid-seventies were dynamite.

How is it these days.

Oh, it's just fine these days, but it's not like - it has outgrown that relaxed, unembarrassed frivolity. It has become very self-conscious. Austin is self-conscious, and Austin wasn't self-conscious during the seventies. The players weren't. The audiences weren't. Now everybody is cool. The players are still boisterous, I think, but they're older you know. There are younger players coming up and there are great players all over town, but the music is changing too. Austin is full of music, lots of different kinds of music. You can hear the best of the best, down there, I think. It doesn't sound like it does anywhere else. You can hear great new wave music. You can hear some serious folk music - once again. You haven't been able to do that in a long time. Austin is hot. Jazz musicians have grown up there, that are alive and active and forty years old. They have grown up there, playing music for twenty years. The Johnny Inmon's of the world - from the Lost Gonzo Band. The Van Wilkes of this world. The Spencer Starnes, who is a bass player. They've grown up there, and they know what they are doing.

How did the Capitol deal come together.

That was Moon Hill, through Chalice Productions, who were David Chackler and Lee Lasseff out in California and then into Capitol Records. The timing was great too. I don't think I did a very good job on those records. I didn't know what control was. I was out of control and uncontrollable, I guess. I wouldn't go back and do them over again, but it was a growing process. I thought they were better than what folks got to hear of them. I thought they could have been heard more than they were. I mean, I wasn't putting out shit. The songs are still good.



The songs are sound.

The song are sound (laughs).

The voice was still there.

What I like the most is that the voice is still here. I like that the most. The voice was young and edgy in those days. It was a young voice, but bright songs and great players and good productions, you know. We cut the first record, the RUMOUR

record - we cut that in three different studios. We cut it in Tulsa, Oklahoma - Austin, Texas and Los Angeles, California. *Knockin' On Wood* is Jerry Jeff's favourite song, that I ever wrote, he told me. He actually said it was "Cowjazz." That's a great cut. Bears. People holler for *Bears* everywhere I go. I still haven't cut *Texas Trilogy* the way I want to cut it. I cut it again on the Lone Star label record, the thing I did for Willie (Nelson). The *JUS' PLAYIN' ALONG* album - I love that cut, but - it was Nashville. I call that record, "*Uncle Wiggly goes to Nashville*." I haven't cut that song right yet. This next record that I'm going to cut, it will be just perfect. The *FROLICKING IN THE MYTH* record was also a growth record. It was different ways to do things. Different sounds to play, and a producer with whom I didn't see things, totally eye-to-eye. He knew all the stuff, and said he was - and is, a really good producer. He taught me a lot of stuff. **(ED. NOTE.** Steven was referring to Joe Renzetti. Among other albums Renzetti produced was *THE BUZZARD OF LOVE* by the notorious Simon Stokes). I had a chance to go with Joni Mitchell's producer, but he told me that what he does, is sit and let Joni do whatever she wants. I had no idea what I wanted, so I couldn't go with him. Henry Lewy was his name. Now, I'd like to do one with Henry simply because, if he is still alive, he knows so much about making records. I'm just realising that I can make records, '*in there*.' '*In there*,' being the booth. In the studio, I think I know what to do now.

Was the deal with Capitol, just for the two albums.

No. I felt like I wasn't being treated well by Chalice, the production company. I didn't think I was getting any support from them, and I had them between me and the record company. My management situation wasn't pleasing me either. I was thinking bigger than I was getting. Whether I was ready for that or not, I'm not sure, but it wasn't right. I took my lawyer and went to California and broke the Chalice contract. Capitol said at the time, "*You can stay with us, just pick up the debt*." I'd been smart enough to realise that \$50,000 was nothing, I'd have taken up the debt and stayed with Capitol, and still be there probably. I wasn't and I didn't, and that's the way that goes. Then I started spending time - well, I came back to where my strength was - Willie had covered my song *I'd Have To Be Crazy* and had a big hit. It never got to No. 1, but it stayed at No. 2 or 3 for a long, long time. It still delivers nice little cheques, now and again.



At the time, you made your first movie.

Yes, I made *OUTLAW BLUES*.

Can you explain why there are songs by you on the soundtrack album, which don't feature in the movie. The album was released by Capitol Records.

The soundtrack record was made the early-to-middle winter after the movie was completed. The movie was made in October, and we made the soundtrack, in like January. They put my songs on there, just because they had to put some songs on the record.

I know that he's credited on the album liner, but did Hoyt Axton really produce all the tracks.

Yes (laughs). They called me. Jerry Jeff and I were on the beginning of a roar. Early in the roar. I get a phone call that tracks me down from L.A. This is early 1978. My sister Angela is managing me at the time. I got this phone call and it said, "*You got to be in L.A. tomorrow. They want you to work on the soundtrack record with them*." I'm hanging out with Jerry Jeff and we're just crazed. I said "*You bet*," and Jerry Jeff said "*I'll go with you*." We sit and roar all night long. Got more crazed, and went by my sister's house, because she has some vitamin B12. She gives both of us a shot,

and puts us on the aeroplane (laughs). Jerry had telephoned ahead. The folks are waiting for him in California. We get to the night before we've got to go to work. We end up down at The Palomino Club, roarin' and raising hell. Jerry Jeff is well known. No one knows who the hell I am, except in certain circles. I lived at a friend's house. We do some cutting late one afternoon and only have, like two songs. I'm singing like I sing, and the band loves it. Hoyt is being "a horse's ass," and Jerry Jeff tells him, "*Hoyt, let the man sing.*" I end up that night, at the house of a pal of mine - this lady friend of mine - The Magic Princess. We stayed up all night long. I go in the next day, to cut the vocals, and I hit it - nailed the son of a bitch, and pleased Hoyt just fine. I could hardly stand up, but he liked them. Nothing I'd done before was right, and I guess I had jet lag, but I was well ahead that day. I'd forgotten that story. That's how that happened. I just got called up to put some songs on there. I got the part in the movie because I went to pitch a song to Stephen Tisch the producer. He liked the song. He said "*I've got this part in the movie. It's meant for a black guy. You could do it couldn't you?*" I said "*Sure, I could do it.*"

In OUTLAW BLUES you were the soundman, and it became your job for life.

I was Elroy. I was also the soundman in SONGWRITER. (**ED. NOTE.** SONGWRITER was a 1984 Tri-Star movie which starred Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson with Lesley Ann Warren and Melinda Dillon providing the female interest. As the movie title suggests, the Bud Shrake screenplay was about the trials and tribulations of a couple of country singers. A soundtrack album was released by CBS in the States and in Europe. It featured Doc's Side (Willie) and Blackie's Side (Kris)). I got a great internal laugh off that though, being the soundman in that movie. They cut about half the movie before they realised that the director was a jerk. He had Willie dressed up like Gene Autry. (Sydney) Pollock came in, fired him, and took over production of the project with Alan Rudolph directing the thing. The picture came up looking real good. At one point during the first part of the filming, my role was a lot bigger. I guess I dressed right. The gal who plays Willie's ex-wife comes in and says - I'm the soundman, remember - we had lines together. She says "*What should I call you,*" and I said "*Just call me Elroy*" (laughs). Then I told Willie "*This is my second picture as the continuing saga of Elroy.*" I called it "*Elroy goes to Nashville*" (laughs). I've broken out of that now. In this new movie coming out, called POSITIVE I.D., I play an undercover cop called Roy. I got the El off.

Going back to the soundtrack album for OUTLAW BLUES, there is a song on there by Lee Clayton. I believe he is a friend of yours.

Yes he is. I met Lee Clayton in Nashville, Tennessee. Just outside Nashville actually. I'd gone - Alex Harvey was comin' through town, and we were friends from golf tournaments. We knew each other and had played some dates together. (**ED. NOTE.** The Alexander Harvey that we are talking about here, is the writer of songs like *Delta Dawn*, *Reuben James* and *Tulsa Turnaround*. Not the, late, Scottish born bluesman). He had a couple of real good players with him at the time - this was like 1976 or 1977 - that I loved a lot. Really good guys, who played well and were fun people to get high with. Play music with, whatever. He came through Austin on his way to Nashville to do a demo for Allen Reynolds. He needed some players. He needed a rhythm player, a fiddle player and another good lead guitar player. He and Craig Hillis - my partner in Felicity Records - were also pals. He picked up Hillis and myself, to play rhythm guitar. We picked up Alvin Crow to play fiddle, and we were going to Nashville. Stopped off in Dallas and tried to get B. W. Stevenson. We woke him up at the Howard Johnson. He's in there with some chick. We pound on the door, till he gets



out of bed. It was ruthless. I once had a great big yellow GMC motor home, you know, and I love to drive those big things. I said, *"I'm driving, if we're going to Tennessee."* In the end, B. W. didn't go with us. We got there and cut this demo record and it sounded real good. I played twelve-string guitar. Lots of guitar. These were Alex's tunes. Simple productions, but it sounded nice. I liked it. Nobody else seemed to like it, at that time. The night before we left, we had a big party at the *Loveless Motor Hotel*. Lee Clayton came to the party. He'd been at the studio, but I really hadn't had a chance to see him, because I was in there playing. He and I just hit it off. I liked him immediately, because there is an honesty in a man's eyes that is hard not to observe. Then we didn't see each other for a bit, except when I went to Nashville. I opened for Michael Murphey at the Exit/In, a couple of times. Stuff like that. Saw Lee while I was up there. Then - I was playing Dallas a lot, and having to drive there a lot. I had a tape in the car. A friend of mine had the record at her house - the Waylon Jennings record that had all the Lee Clayton tunes (**ED. NOTE.** The album is *LADIES LOVE OUTLAWS* recorded by Waylon in 1971. Two years later, Lee released his first solo album on the MCA label). My friend Travis and I were driving from Austin to Dallas. I'd never really heard Lee's tunes before. I mean, I'd heard them - but I'd never really heard them on that level. I was so stunned by what he said. Like I say, I'd heard them, but I wasn't listening closely in those days, I guess. The songs I heard Waylon sing killed me. His songs are special, and that record had a bunch of Lee Clayton tunes on it. Then he and I saw each other more and more, and we just became pretty good pals. He lives in Austin now. He has moved, just in the last month or so. Lee is in Austin, Texas right now. I could put you in touch with him tonight. Lee's a wonderful player and a wonderful songwriter and a dear man. He's a spiritual kind of guy. *If You Can Touch Her At All*, that song - I mean that's real man. My wife says, *"That's reaching up, and touching it."*

In 1978, Willie was suddenly offered the world by the Phonogram label.

They wanted Willie to quit CBS and go to Phonogram. He didn't do that, so they dropped his Lone Star label. They made my album, one by the Geezinslaw Brothers, Ray Wylie's and Cooder Browne. (**ED. NOTE.** Plus Willie's *FACE OF A FIGHTER* recorded in Nashville in 1961 and Bill Callery's debut album. Of course, we shouldn't forget the *SIX PACK* compilation/sampler album). Anyway, I loved mine.

Did you feel that you had been dumped again.



You can look at it that way, if you like. As things would have it, the planned single didn't come out. I had a song scheduled to go on the charts at No. 67 with a bullet. That's the way it goes.

You just said that you loved your Lone Star album.

Oh, I enjoyed doing it a great deal. I had a chance to be '*Uncle Wiggly Bill in Nashville*.' I got to go up there and get the best players in town to sit around me, and play my songs. We made some real good music. That's what it was. I sat down and got eleven players around me. The only thing overdubbed on that, is a couple of my vocals and the background vocals. Everything else is pretty much damned straight. It was a thrill.

What about the producer Ken Laxton. Did he have much input.

He helped me pick the players. He was a very nice man, and knew what he was doing. He was a good producer and did the very best that he could with me. I held him back to a degree, because I

did what I wanted. I got the players to sit down with me and run through my songs. I had a chance to do that, and I took it. He said, *“Let’s put strings on this.”* I’d say, *“No. I don’t want strings.”* I was a purist in those days. A bit more than I am now, as far as - like, with a harmoniser - I wouldn’t use the electronic gadgets that he had. I wouldn’t mess with that stuff. I wanted those players sitting around me, to play my songs pretty much live, and we did that. It sounds great. Of my records, up until what I have just done here with this new tape, JUS PLAYIN’ ALONG is my favourite album. The FRUMMOX records stand alone, because they were not my records, they were our records - me and McCrimmon. Of the rest of my stuff, that Lone Star record is my favourite. It was a step toward maturity and good times. Good tunes. A bunch of new tunes and a couple of old tunes were on that record.

To be continued.

Brought to you from the desk of the Folk Villager.

Arthur Wood
Kerrville Kronikles 8/86 & 05/14

Photo Credits: Interview Part 1

001 HERE TO THERE [1969], Frummox gatefold album cover, L. to R. Dan McCrimmon, Steven Fromholz

002 L. to R. Steven Fromholz & Dan McCrimmon (Photo: unknown)

003 A RUMOUR IN MY OWN TIME [1976] album cover

004 Steven Fromholz, pic. from rear of RUMOUR cover (Photo: unknown)

005 Steven Fromholz (Photo: Michael Ochs Archive)

006 FROLICKING IN THE MYTH [1977] album cover

007 OUTLAW BLUES [1977] album cover

008 JUS’ PLAYIN’ ALONG [1978] album cover

009 Steven Fromholz pic. from rear of JUS’ PLAYIN’ ALONG cover (Photo: Dick Reeves)

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Steven Fromholz – A Four Part Tribute

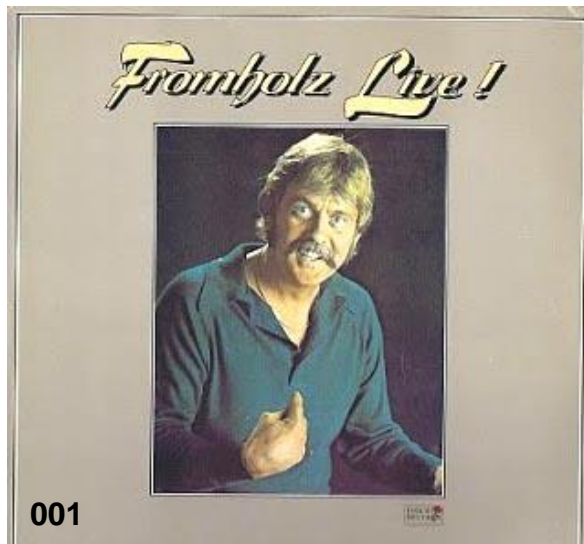
On Monday 26th May, a Steven Fromholz Memorial Concert will be held at Threadgill Theatre as part of the 2014 Kerrville Folk Festival. A reminiscence of the Memorial Concert will form the fourth and final part of this tribute to the late musician. A Steven Fromholz interview dating from 1986 constitutes Parts 1 & 2, the third part is a Biography including details of Steven's exploits 1986 - 2014.

Part 2 - A 1986 Interview

The interview with Steven Fromholz was conducted in Room 216 of the Y.O. Ranch Resort Hotel, Kerrville on the evening of Tuesday 27th May 1986. Steven had just played the interviewer, a tape of his latest recording which, at that time, was titled LOVE SONGS. Part 1 of this interview closed with insights into the release of Steven's 1978 album JUS' PLAYIN' ALONG on Willie Nelson's short-lived, Phonogram Records owned imprint Lone Star Records. The interview continued.....

Then we come to Felicity Records.

Which was founded to do a live album.



At one time, you had a set up called One Man's Music, was that a precursor of.....

That was just prior to Felicity Records. Felicity came into being - One Man's Music finished up on the second day of January 1979. Felicity Records came into being, like, on the 23rd or 24th of September of the same year.

Was One Man's Music a promotional company formed to promote your songs.

Yes, and that was also my managerial organisation. My sister Angela and I were One Man's Music. We did my publishing out of there. My booking. Publicity, whatever it was, all came under that umbrella.

At one time you had worked for Moon Hill Management.

I was with Moon Hill from late 1972 till the middle of 1977, I guess. Late 1977 perhaps.

Was that where you first encountered Craig Hillis.

I came across Craig Hillis when Dan and I were together in 1970. Craig was living at a place called Moon on the Hill with John Inmon and some other great players. Donny Dolan, who is a wonderful drummer, was there. Also Layton DePenning, a great bass and guitar player. He accidentally came into the place we were playing, and heard me and Dan. We were playing at The Chequered Flag one night and he liked us. Craig Hillis introduced Daniel and I to playing folk music with electric guitars and other instruments behind us. He was a guitar player in Captain Duck and the Farmers Electric Co-op Band and is one of my best friends to this day.

So you went into partnership with Craig Hillis and formed Felicity Records.

Yea, we formed Felicity Records and we were going to do a live recording at Steamboat Springs 1874. We recorded it, and had to name the company something - three days after the record was finished my daughter Felicity was born. Felicity Rose. That's how we named the company Felicity Records, with a rose in the logo. We've still got the company together you know. We've done three Xmas albums as you'll probably have heard.

Yes, I want to come back to that. A single appeared in Britain a couple of years after the FROMHOLZ LIVE album was recorded. One side featured a duet with you and Willie Nelson, singing Hondo's Song. Was anything else cut at that time.

No, just that. That was an idea which was ahead of its time. Craig had the idea to do it. We cut the thing, and it was difficult to cut - the timing was weird. We didn't get it mixed for a long time. It hung around for a long, long time. I guess that it's a collector's item now. We cut that at Wink Tyler's Studio - Austin Recording. It was a weird project from the beginning. It was a good idea, but it wasn't quite executed well enough, to suit anyone. **(ED. NOTE.** *Hondo's Song* was a Fromholz composition. Issued in the U.K. in 1981 by Youngblood Records, Index No. YB 122, the B-Side was *I'd Have To Be Crazy*, drawn from the LIVE album. *Hondo's Song* finally made it to CD as part of the 2011 release TEXAS TRILOGY GOES TO G'NASHVILLE).

LIVE and the Christmas albums apart, there have been a number of other Felicity Records releases. FRUMMOX II, for instance, features all new songs including another three song cycle The Steam And Diesel Suite.

Yea. They're new Frummox songs to the record, but we used to perform them. This was put together because a bunch of folks wanted another Frummox record. We had no control, and have no control over the original Frummox record. I'm going to get it sooner or later, because I know where it is now, I think. This is a collection of songs that Dan and I did, towards the end - the songs were mostly written after the first Frummox record was recorded. This was what Frummox was doing when we broke up. Let me see - *The Angel* - I wrote that song in 1965. *The Steam And Diesel Suite* was written either the winter of 1970 or early spring of 1971. Dan and I were on the road. In a Pueblo, Colorado nightclub called the The Irish Pub, we met a man named Jack Frost. He was a brakeman in Santa Fe. He set us off. I wrote *Get Outta My Way* first, Dan wrote *River Queen*, and we wrote *Jack Frost* together. *Talkin' Trucker Blues*, is one of Daniel's fairly recent songs. *New York Goodbye*, Dan and I wrote in Philadelphia during 1970. *The Porter Makes The Train*, Dan and I wrote on a Santa Fe train going from Denver to Fort Worth in 1970. *White China Canyons*, Dan and I wrote in a mountain town in Colorado - I forget what the town was - probably around 1970. It was the last thing he and I did together. Folks wanted to hear us singing together again so we did this album.

Even though Felicity was your own label, did you feel that pressure to do the FRUMMOX II album, was being exerted by your fans.

Oh, no, no, no. I enjoyed doing it. I think Dan and I, when the ABC record came out, we wanted to make another. Frummox broke up because interest in our area of music died down. Two piece folk music duos with people like Brewer and Shipley - because they were our main competition - they got hotter than we did. We were a bit more esoteric than they were, plus I got a job offer that I couldn't refuse. FRUMMOX II was done to satisfy our fans and ourselves.

The album is Felicity # 03. FROMHOLZ LIVE was Felicity # 01. There's an album called AUSTIN ALL STARS, Felicity # 04, which -

There's a band - a group of musicians called the Austin All Stars who play cover music and they play it great. # 02 was the first Xmas record, THE AUSTIN CHRISTMAS COLLECTION. # 05 and # 06 are the two other Xmas albums. We got Arthur Brown on the last one. He



lives in Austin now and he's a housepainter. He wears some weird shit. He did *Lord Of The Dance*, the British Xmas carol. It blew him out of his mind. We got Willie Nelson on the last one, singing *Silent Night*. We've also had Bill and Bonnie Hearne, and the Austin All Stars did one song. We did a video of the *Bell Carol*. There's an Austin band called 14K, and this next Xmas there will be a video out on MTV of *Xmas Bells* featuring 14K. We did it late last year, too late to get them to play it, but they love it. Beto and the Fairlanes are on there, and Marcia Ball, and Bob Livingston of the Gonzo's. My jazz singer friend Mady Kaye, with whom I've worked in concert, has also done a song. A lot of Austin bands you may, or may not know - Carolyn Hester was on the second volume, Allen Damron will be doing a song this next winter.

What about distribution of the Austin Xmas albums.

We haven't made a God damned penny. Craig and I did the first one, because we argued whose idea it was. I think it was mine. He's sure it was his. I mean, I'm a very sentimental guy and so is Craig. But, an Austin Xmas record - because Austin is kinda different. It's not Nashville, and it's not better or worse than - it's just different. We wanted to give something back, so we decided to sing for ourselves and for our friends. It just progressed from there, because there were are so many great talents there. We've done three records and we've lost lots of money. The year after next we'll do another one, and we'll get Townes Van Zandt on that one. There's not enough love in the world. Craig and I both recognise that this is trying to give something back. Austin has been very, very good to me and Craig. Craig owns Steamboat now. He didn't when we made the LIVE record. He owns it now, and it's important to give something back. With those Xmas albums, we put some people on record and took them into the studio. They had never been there before. Never. Well, not never, not as soon. I can't say never, but they didn't have a chance before to do this. Everybody wins and if we lose money, we can tax it off. We haven't got that much money to lose, but a couple of thousand bucks - we'll put the record out by God. We got the records on the streets and some folks bought them. It's a great Xmas gift. When I come to England and Germany this next year, I'm going to bring boxes of those albums because you folks need it.

Returning to movies that you have made, we've covered OUTLAW BLUES and you mentioned SONGWRITER.

Before SONGWRITER I was in a picture called CLOAK AND DAGGER with Dabney Coleman and Henry Thomas. Henry is the kid who played Elliott in E.T. I play a big guy with a beard and I have four lines in the picture, but I get good video play. I get good money from that. I'm getting paid. I made another movie this last August, a Dallas production with a similar budget to CHAIN SAW MASSACRE. That kind of deal but I don't know how good it is yet - It's called POSITIVE I.D. and I have a legitimate, honest to God acting part. I play an undercover cop. I get third billing in the movie and we're premiering it soon. Andy Anderson, a movie maker of some renown, directed it. He's out of Florida originally and is now based in Texas. He spent a long time with the U.T.A. Film Department as head of that Department and he has made award winning short movies. This is his second feature. They're premiering it at the Munich Film Festival, and that is wonderful - because I didn't know, till I saw Andy about three weeks ago - he said "Yea, we're going to the Munich Film Festival, and the promoter in Munich asked who was in the picture." Andy said, "I told him so and so, and so and so and Steven Fromholz." The promoter said, "Steven Fromholz, I love his music" (laughs). This is Munich, Germany man. That's why my new manager and I, want to go to Germany as quickly as possible. It could be a real nice step. I like movies. I like acting. Like Willie says, "It's better than work, and it sure beats work."

Tell me about the play WILLIE THE SHAKE, which you performed in during 1983.



The play was written by my publisher Tommy White. I was cajoled and marooned into doing it, by a very strong willed director. I had a great time. It was put on at a place outside of Austin. Every summer they have a Shakespeare Festival there for students. They have students come out with a good director/teacher person and they do Shakespeare. This was a - not a parody of that, but based around that experience. I played the head of the Shakespeare Department, and directed the kids. I'd done a bunch of acting in Colorado during the sixties. McCrimmon was stage manager at a College there - a Catholic girl's school. They didn't have enough men for parts. I had a lot of spare time, so I did a bunch of acting out there. I hadn't done

much of that since. This would have been like 1969 and 1970. I hadn't done a play in a long time, but I really enjoy acting and playing parts. It was the culmination of a lot of connections, with Tommy White being my publisher. He's a good playwright. It was an experimental situation, and it was really good P.R., plus the play was good and interesting.

Have you been offered any other parts in stage plays.

No, but I'm feeling myself getting into that position, where I want to do it again. I still have a bunch of good friends in theatre. Like I said earlier, in the last five years I've been doing more and more and different things. I figure that I'm in show business now. When I did my second movie, I figured I was in show business. As my nightclub act gets better and better, and my comedic timing gets better and better - then, I figure that I'm in show business. When I can do more things, I'm in show business. I love doing more things. I like being all the things I can be, but I'm not sure what the sum of those things are yet. Acting is great sport. I'm just learning about that really.

Do you think that acting is something that is going to become more prominent in your life.

Oh yea, and I'd really like to make some more movies.

But surely you would never give up playing music entirely.

No. Nanci Griffith and I were talking about this earlier. I've got to sing and play. I've got to go out, and get the light on me, just where I want it. Get my guitar out and bullshit with the folks. Just to see that I'm doing OK. Sing some songs. Entertain the folks. I like to entertain the folks. I enjoy being enjoyed.

Back in 1977, MCA released an album by a guy called Dan McCorison, who was supposedly a friend of yours.

I've never heard of him. It was probably a mistake for Dan McCrimmon. It's just one of those little things, the names are so similar. I remember one time, I played in this PRO-AM - well, I would have if it hadn't rained - at the Greater Greensboro Open. It's a big golf tournament that the PGA arranges early in the PGA season in the States. At that time, Susan St. James was hanging out with Stephen Stills. They were, I think, engaged for a short time. Well, somehow they got me mixed up in that, and thought either I was him, or she was with me. I got invited to play this damned tournament, so of course I went. It was funny. That must have been just after we made OUTLAW BLUES about the March of 1978. (**ED. NOTE.** Susan St. James played the female lead in OUTLAW BLUES, opposite Peter Fonda). It was funny being confused with somebody else. Not

even being confused with somebody else really, but the situation was convoluted, if you understand what I mean.

The new album that you have just recorded, you mentioned earlier that you had found a studio in Austin that you really liked.

I recorded this tape at Arlyn Studios in the Austin Opera House. A guy named Freddy Fletcher owns the place (**ED. NOTE.** Aka Fast Freddy and a drummer, he's also Willie Nelson's nephew). It's a delightful studio, roomy, and was built by a fine acoustic engineer out of Nashville. He kitted it out for a lot of money, and it sounds great. They run it well. This is the first thing I ever heard out of Austin, that I felt was really quality stuff, and it's mine. I'm not knocking anybody's product at all, by making that comment.

The first song is called Lady's Man.

Yes, *Lady's Man*. Three ladies sing back-up vocals. Eliza Gilkyson you may have heard of. Karen Kraft you will hear of if you have not, and a girl named Gwen Newsome who I met on the sessions. They're all singers of different types and qualities, but they work together now and then. *Ladies Man* is about a year old. My wife loves it. I'm pleased that she likes that song.

Next is a real smooth arrangement of Isla Mujeres. It's nothing like the version on your LIVE album.

That's very tropical that song. I'd like to sell that song to - nah - to nobody. I offered it to Rodriguez once and to Ronstadt as well. They weren't interested. Next is *In My Solitude*, the Duke Ellington tune. I learned that song with Mady Kaye, my jazz friend, on one of our concerts. I love the song, and I had Budameyer play trumpet, and Bobby is a great player - Johnny Gimble played fiddle. Riley Osbourn played keyboards on all my sessions. Spencer Starnes played bass and Art Kidd was on drums. That's so you can mention the rhythm section, because the rhythm section make this record. We'd been in the studio for one day, sat there for six hours and went over ten tunes. We wrote all the numbers down, like I play them on stage. The next day and every day after that, doing basics, we'd hit the studio and I'd go in with them. I'd play - like warming up - and get everybody familiar with the songs. Taking my guitar out and go sit down, so that they knew how the songs went. They knew how I wanted them to go and they'd play it. I play on stage so much to back up myself, because you have to - I have to. When I play with other players, I can't do it like I do onstage. Onstage I'm playing four parts or three parts by myself. I was hip enough to say "*Wait a minute, let them play*" and it worked. I went back when they'd finished, and laid down real straight rhythm parts. Like your hired Nashville men play - just straight chonk, chonk, chonk stuff. When I'm playing for myself, I pop and I zip and I slide. I'm not a great guitar player, but I move around a lot and it looks good.



Then we have I'd Have To Be Crazy. The girls singing back up there sound black.

One of them is. Gwen Newsome. We'd just recorded another song that comes later on the tape, *A Candle Burns*. There's a real sweet country "ooh" part in it. Gwen with her gospel soul couldn't hack it. It wasn't in her chops. Not to say that she is not a great singer, but that wasn't in her

repertoire. She'd never had to do that before, so I had Eliza sing it. After that, we started working on *I'd Have To Be Crazy*. When I said what I wanted on that song, Gwen just took it and did that gospel stuff. That's why they sound so black. Gwen made them sing, under my direction, what she was singing. I said, "*You sing what she says to sing, because that's black southern Baptist gospel.*" That's what I wanted. The song starts out – it's like a pyramid – it's like a Mayan pyramid with a nice smooth flat place on top at the very peak. The song builds up to where the girls come in. On electric mandolin is Paul Glasse who works with the Festival here a lot. He's a great mandolin player. He whips this lead out of her vocal. He whips it right out of Gwen's screaming top note and keeps it up there, at this lovely peak. Then the girls come back in, and it goes back out, on that pyramid structure. I was able to just get, what I by God wanted. Without Gwen in there, I couldn't have got it. It made her feel better too, because she had a hard time on the song just prior to that. Boy, did she have a tough time with it.

Next up is the song you said Gwen struggled with, A Candle Burns.

My old manager Larry Watkins publishes that tune, and I was at his house one night -

So who is the songwriter, Shane Davis.

I've never met the man. I heard the song and I thought how simply lovely, and how sad. I said, "*Man, I've got to cut that song.*" I wanted to cut some songs by other people anyway. I'm trying to show some versatility on this record, as opposed to getting in a groove and staying there in one style. I think I'm doing that and that song - I already had a song called *Cheatin' Home To Me*, on the flip side of the tape we heard – it's a real good two step country tune, with a brim-to-brim dancing feel. This song balanced that one off. I'm trying to balance both sides of the record. If it comes out, which it will I'm sure on vinyl, I want it balanced. You play one side, then the other. You'll not hear the same thing, but a balance in there and that's what that song supplied. It's a good tune.

And then there's Blue.

The full title is *Blue Would I Be*. That's a pretty new song.

It has a real neat hook line.

It's full of them. I love that song. That's a song that everybody is singing right now, who has heard the tape. They like that song. It's not more than six months old. With the way I write, that song is recent.

Cheatin' Home To Me, comes next.

That is a song I had to write. I couldn't help it. There was no way to avoid writing that song. Wes Kalauza supplied the steel guitar licks. It's a Czechoslovakian name. He lives up in a little town in West Texas, North of Waco (**ED. NOTE.** Wes is credited in the liner as The Waco Kid). I'd played with him, one time, on a Governor's Sesquicentennial Ball. He was part of the band, and I wanted a steel player. My engineer Dave McNair - great engineer, wonderful ears - he said to try Wes. Wes doesn't say much. He's the kind of guy who you say, "*Hey, say something in the microphone to see if it is working alright on talk back.*" He says "*Talk back*" and that's it, but he plays great and sweet. The next song is *Making My Getaway*.

That seemed a strange track in the context of the rest of the album. It's a real piece of rock 'n' roll.

It's not going to be in that position on the record. That tape was my first attempt to put the songs in their positions. In my mind, I've already changed three or four things. That's a getaway song and that's the truth. That's the song that says "*Get me out of here. I've had all I want.*" That's the song that scared managers to death (laughs). *Making My Getaway* - I liked that song a lot, because I mean exactly what I said. I also enjoyed putting that song together as a producer, because it's hot and it moves. It's not overbearing. It's not as though somebody is going to jump on your head and beat you down, but it moves and it moves good. I learned that offbeat shit from Stephen Stills. It's offbeat, backbeat stuff. There's not another backbeat, offbeat song on the record.

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Who is playing saxophone on that track.

A man named Tony Campisi. I met him when I was doing a radio show. He's a Sicilian dude from Houston, who moved to Austin looking for musicians to play with. He does stuff with the Houston Pops and the Houston Symphony. When ZZ Top were on the Johnny Carson Show here in Austin a week or so ago, the charts that the band was playing were Campisi charts. He and I became fast friends. My respect for him as a player - all the horns, all the flutes - all that stuff on the record is him. Everything. He also played on the next song, *Rainy Day*, the Jimmy Van Heusen tune. That's a bass flute he is playing and it blew me away. The tune comes from 1953. My friend Bud

Shrake suggested I record the song. The ballad record was his idea anyway. I did it for him. By the time I finally learned the tune and sang the vocal, I'd fallen in love with the song. It's like Nanci Griffith said, it's her favourite cut on the record. If I can have a hit on a standard then, doctor my eyes. It's a very good tune. Then there's *Jane's House* where I live - where I'm lucky to live. I'm gonna take it back and get my guitar player and my squeezebox player to cut that song again.

So recapping, which tunes on Love Songs didn't you write.

I didn't write *A Candle Burns*, *Here's That Rainy Day* and *In My Solitude*.

Where are you going to try to push this record.

I'm going to go to New York City first and approach - I have good connections with CBS. I have connections with Warner Brothers. Of course I have a good record with Capitol. I'm going to approach the folk I think would like this record. It's gonna be hard to and hard not to, classify some of that stuff as real country stuff. But it is. Some of that stuff is real country stuff. I think there are folks who ought to listen to love songs, and that's what I'm selling.

Even with your own label Felicity Records, are you looking for another record company to place this album with.

Well, if nothing else happens and if no one buys the rights to release my record, I'll put that sucker out on Felicity Records so fast, it will make your great British head spin.

Having set up your own label, do you feel happy about trying to deal with other record companies.

Yes, because I feel I have something they will like. Like I said, the worst I have is a really great demo tape -

And at the best -

The best demo tape that you can make. The best however, is an album that comes out and which folks love to buy and dance to. I wanted things they could dance to. I wanted songs that would touch people in a variety of ways, but based around love. They're all love songs of one sort or another. *Making My Getaway* is freedom - a love of freedom. I enjoy singing ballads, especially standards like *In My Solitude*. The first time I sang that on stage, I stopped an audience of four-hundred folks in the auditorium, and eight-hundred folks standing around the outside of the amphitheatre. I nailed them. They all just went - "Oooh." I thought well that's a real good tune, I'd better sing that song again. *Rainy Day* I just learned for this record - that and *A Candle Burns* are songs I had to learn to do. It touches me, you know. It's a sad song and it gave me a chance to sing all of my range. *Rainy Day* goes from way up here, to way down here. *In My Solitude* moves around that low edge. *Rainy Day* goes through a vast warehouse of musical notes.

One thing I came to Texas for was to see Steven Fromholz. I didn't think I would see the same Fromholz who made the LIVE album, but it was a chance to see a legend.



Silly boy (laughs). I've got longevity and I'm a survivor.

Onstage the other night you mentioned that you missed Kerrville last year because you had to go to Alaska. I guess you went to visit Darcie.

That was to go to Darcie's High School graduation, and bring Darcie back to Texas - which I did. She's 18, going on 27 (laughs). She's lovely, and quick as a whip, though she's calming down a bit. When she first got to Texas - having come from Fairbanks, Alaska to Austin, Texas - it was a remarkable change, and it shocked her hard. She was a kid at the time and now she is a young woman. It's very obvious. She was at my house for dinner last Thursday night and we're really good friends. I love her dearly and she loves me. Our relationship has been such that we can tell each other things that fathers and daughters might not necessarily talk about. She's been to see me since she was eight years old, every summer - until now. That's not a full-time relationship. I've always been a musician and a player, and she has travelled with me on the road. She toured with me in 1978, over Xmas - me, Leon Russell and Willie Nelson. I took my whole family and went on the road. Me and Janey and Darcie, and a friend of ours named Karla Marshall, who helped us with her. Darcie has been out there with me. She met Willie Nelson and Leon Russell, and knows all those folks. She told me, "Oh, I quit smoking daddy, when I was six years old." She's a hippie's kid. She was born in 1967 when we were in California. She grew up in a guitar case almost, till her mother June and I broke up. She's a joy and she's really fun and we're getting closer and closer. She likes what I do. I took her in the studio one day, when I was doing a bunch of stuff. I started out

by playing the mixes for her. Especially what is happening right now and she likes what I'm doing, so it must be OK.

Can you tell me something about this radio show which you did in Austin.

It started in April of 1984 and lasted till the September of 1985. It was a two-hour long radio show, with a live nine-piece band and two comperes - myself and Sammy Allred as the host and co-host (**ED. NOTE.** Sammy is one of the Geezinslaw Brothers). It was presented on the Austin Opera House stage - we began at the Continental Club, but after a few weeks, that venue got too small. It didn't take long. We went to the Austin Opera House and in two hours featured five bands a night and all sorts of music. Broadway shows that played in Austin with local casts. Fats Waller shows - conjuncto music, like the Mariachi Estrella - rock n' roll of all sorts and other genres - folk singers, individual songwriters, lesbian quartets. Big Xmas galas with weird people and fantastic music. It was eighty weeks of live radio on KTXZ, which is a small local AM station. I was working with them in different associations, and I owned part of it for a short time. Almost all the people we had on were Texas players, although we did have for instance, the City Lights Orchestra from Kansas, Missouri who are a knockout. I had some really good friends of mine come down from Arkansas. Pals of mine, from all over Texas. I had, God bless him, Steve Goodman on the show just before he died. He was down the street playing and we had been friends for a while. I ran down to where he was playing and said, "*Hey man, I'm doing a live radio show. C'mon up.*" He came up and played - that was about two months before he died. Maria Muldaur. Ramblin' Jack Elliott. Anybody who we could get, people passing through town. Roy Head. Blues people. Jazz people. Bebop. We were on, from eight to ten on Monday nights and I sang a couple of songs every show. I introduced commercials - introduced my friend and pal Sammy Allred, one of the funniest people on radio - in the world, for that matter. We had jugglers on the show, my friend Turk Pipkin came on. He said he was going to juggle white mice. He had three balls, that squeaked - that kind of weird bullshit. We had a belly dancer on the show one night. We had comedians that travelled through town, who played the Last Stops and Comedy Stores. We entertained Austin. And we had a live audience, every night we were on. It varied from 40 people to 300 people, depending on what was going on, and what kind of night it was. There was a bar. It was a nightclub radio show. We had commercials every fifteen to twenty minutes, and it worked, for eighteen months. Just on Monday nights. If it had been seven days a week, they'd have had to have paid me a whole lot of money. It was remarkable. After we did that show, suddenly all over the country, shows popped up with a similar format. Dallas had a live show. Another radio station in Austin had a live show. I've been ahead of my time, all my life. I hope I still am. No, I hope I'm catching up right now. I want to catch up now, and go with it for ten years. That radio show was fun. I made contacts on that show. We had Steve Gillette on the show, and Peter Rowan came on the show. Tried to get John Hartford, but we couldn't get him, coming through town. Omar and the Howlers were on the show, as well as the LeRoi Brothers, Marcia Ball and Angela Strehli. Most of the blues singers in town came on. We had the cast of OLIVER on the show, with the kids singing their songs and Fagin sang one of his tunes. A pretty strange mix, but it worked. Then the money ran out. The budget wasn't ever that high, anyway. The station was - the night time signal was such that we weren't reaching the demographics we had to reach to make it work. On a Monday night it was hard to draw folks in, in the numbers that we needed to draw. It just went off the air. They brought it back in another form. We did interviews and all kinds of bizarre stuff. Its back now, out of Alley Oops in Austin, with Sammy Allred and his partner Rockin' Bob, the morning guy off the radio station. It's a different kind of show. It's not the same. It's not doing well I understand. It was great experience with a nine-piece stage band every week. I could sing anything I wanted.

Did you ever perform any of your Love Songs on the show.

Yes, I did *Isla Mujeres*. I also did *Ghost Riders In The Sky*. I did *For What It's Worth*, the Stephen Stills tune. I did *Dixie Chicken*. I had the kind of band who could play anything, and would. We had a rehearsal every Monday, from four till about six or seven, went through our stuff and their stuff. It wasn't much of a rehearsal, but it worked for those guys.

Who were the players that you had in the band.



They were just really good friends of mine. One of my cohorts - one of my helpers put the band together - they were great horn players. Campisi would sit in with us. We had a player named Michael English, one of the most technically proficient guitar players in Austin - he'd play anything you wanted played. They could all read music and were not afraid to write charts and shit like that. We had charts on all our tunes. Walked on stage and everything fell in place.

Steven Fromholz in 1986 looks great and seems to feel comfortable with his life. Don't you feel that you've got to go out to the edge anymore.

Oh, I go out to the edge now and then. Not as much as I used to. All I have to do now is go ahead and play and sing. Entertain the folks and keep myself healthy and looking good. Otherwise, it ain't worth it. It's all there for me to do, and the time is right I think. What I want to do is popular music. I want that front edge of the wave. Hank Williams Jr. for instance, his

latest hit is something like *My Blue Heaven* - or some oldie like that. My ballads might just be the way to the top. I don't care if husbands love it. It doesn't make any difference to me, at all. Their wives probably buy more records than they do in the first place. This album - it was really funny for a while, because I've always been hard to put in a box. They say, "*Where do I put Fromholz records. What part of the shelf do they go on.*" Janey, my wife said "*Man, you've got to make your own box. Take it to the record store and that way, you'll get a Fromholz bin.*" I told the kids at the Songwriters School today "*You don't have to sound like anybody else. Be yourself*" (**ED. NOTE.** At the 1986 Kerrville Folk Festival, Steve Fromholz and Nanci Griffith assisted Bob Gibson with the Songwriters School). I do lots of stuff. One of my next projects is that I want to produce other artists. You know, if someone approaches me. One of the things I got out of this project here, which is clean as a whistle, is that I feel I can now help some performers to produce their records. I'd like to do that for somebody else. I think that I can do that now. I know enough and I don't know enough, where I can do it. My techniques are my own, I think. The next project I want to produce of my own music is a string band record, including *Texas Trilogy* and *Man With The Big Hat*. It will also feature some other string band things that I have written in the last ten to fifteen years. The songs lend themselves to that string band style, which is damned near like an English skiffle band. It gets real close to that. It's goodtime string band music.

Not bluegrass.

No, it's not bluegrass music at all. It's probably closer to jug band music, than it is to bluegrass. Thinking about it, it's probably closer to bluegrass than it is to skiffle band music. It's string band music - almost that Appalachian string band kind of music. It's living room music, with guys with upright basses, banjos and mandolins and stuff. They'll be playing my songs, the way I want them played and I know the players who can do that. The *Trilogy* is my greatest challenge, because I've

got to cut that just right. To do that, I've got to sing it with emotion and meaning and musical fulfillment, and I've got to have the musicians where they can play along with that - where I'm not screwing with them too much. I'm working on that now, in performing. In my performances, I'm trying to get it where I want it. To sing it just right.

When you sang Texas Trilogy the other evening, it sounded fresh and new.

It was a very good rendition, that night. I've slowed things down. I'm not in a hurry with it and sometimes I get in a hurry with it. The songs should run about thirteen and a half minutes. Sometimes I sing it in about twelve forty, twelve forty-five. That's way too fast and means that I'm rushing something. What I usually rush, is the whole song. When I don't rush it, it feels like it did the other night. It gets laid back. The first part is not too fast and not too slow. The second part starts off slow, and gets a train to go in. The third part kind of rolls back down to a nice steady pace and stays there. When I get in a hurry, they all rush. They all sound frantic, and I've got to watch that. *Man With The Big Hat*, is a hit song for somebody. It will be the longest hit ever in country music, except for something like *Delta Dawn*. I've got some other delightful string band things that are pretty, pretty. I've got one song called, *The Pillars Of The Temple*. That's one hell of a tune.

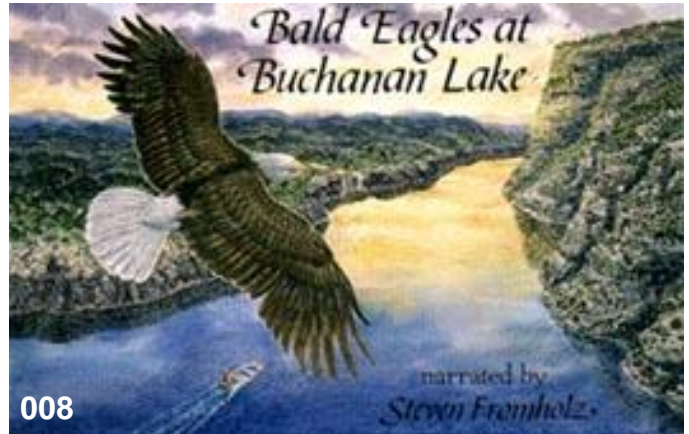
Aren't you worried though, that if you do a project like Love Songs and then follow it up with a string band album, that you will confuse the public.

No, not if I do it well, and if it sounds like me. I'm not afraid, is what I'm saying. Why should I allow anybody else to box me up, I sing and write different kinds of tunes. Nanci treats her songs as individuals. I feel I must do the same. I owe it to my tunes. They've lived long enough and served me well enough. I'm still cutting songs I wrote almost twenty years ago, which the *Trilogy* will be soon. I'll cut it later this year or early next year. That's damned near twenty years of that tune. It stands up real staunch. I've got mother's daughters right now, who are eighteen years old, listening to that same song and raving about it. Their mothers liked it. I must be doing something right, somewhere. The trick is to make it believable to my audience. Present the song in such a way, where they say "*That really is Fromholz*" - and this really is me. This is how I see things at this point in time. There is a renaissance in the record business. If you look at the independents, they're jumping - Rhino, Rounder - they're jumping. The big ones are going to have to jump in too, in their own way. Well, I'm part of that business. I'm that something that's a little bit different. I'm very listenable and this record is eminently danceable. My string band record is gonna make folks cry. Make folks do this (**ED. NOTE.** Steven snapped his fingers), and make folks wonder about shit. That's all I want. Some folks like what I do. Some folks don't think I'm worth a damn. Most folks seem to like what I do and I also give a good stage show. That is what I love the most. Studio is work. Onstage is pure pleasure.

It's fun.

Damned right. Folks clap and lights are on, and it sounds good (laughs).

FOOTNOTE. I mentioned earlier that Steven Fromholz and Nanci Griffith assisted the late Bob Gibson with the 1986 Kerrville Songwriters School. Prior to the interview, Nanci was present in



Room 216 when Steven played the LOVE SONGS cassette. In 1988 Griffith released an album titled LITTLE LOVE AFFAIRS.

Brought to you from the desk of the Folk Villager.

Arthur Wood
Kerrville Kronikles 8/86 & 05/14

Photo Credits: Interview Part 2

001 FROMHOLZ LIVE! [1979] album cover

002 L. to R. Fromholz & BW Stevenson, probably Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Brian Kanof)

003 FRUMMOX II [1982] album cover, L. to R. Dan McCrimmon, Steven Fromholz

004 Steven Fromholz, 1985 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Merri Lu Park)

005 L. to R. Stephanie Rascoe & Steven Fromholz, a still from Positive I.D. [1987] (Photo: Andy Anderson, Universal Pictures)

006 LOVE SONGS [1988] cover of original cassette-only release

007 EVERYBODY'S GOIN' ON THE ROAD accompanied by The Almost Brothers [1991] cover of original cassette-only release

008 Bald Eagles At Buchanan Lake [1992] cover of original cassette-only release

Photos Not Used

021 Steven Fromholz, mainstage at 1996 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

022 L. to R. Fletcher Clark & Steven Fromholz, mainstage at 1996 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

023 L. to R. Steve Fromholz & Lyle Lovett from STEP INSIDE THIS HOUSE photo session (Photo: Michael Wilson)

024 L. to R. Larry Nye, Steven Fromholz & Fletcher Clark, mainstage at 1999 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

025 Steven Fromholz, mainstage at 1999 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

026 A GUEST IN YOUR HEART [2000], album cover

027 COME ON DOWN TO TEXAS FOR AWHILE – THE ANTHOLOGY 1969 - 1991 [2001], album cover

028 LIVE AT ANDERSON FAIR [2001], album cover

029 Craig D. Hillis, with photography by Bruce F. Jordan TEXAS TRILOGY: LIFE IN A SMALL TEXAS TOWN [2002], book cover

030 COWJAZZ [2003] a CD reissue of LOVE SONGS, album cover

031 Steven Fromholz on mainstage, 2004 Kerrville Folk Festival, Houston Night (Photo: Folk Villager)

032 L. to R. James Gilmer, Vince Bell, Ruthie Foster, Eric Taylor, Susan Lindfors Taylor (partially hidden) & Steven Fromholz, 2004 Kerrville Folk Festival, Houston Night (Photo: Folk Villager)

033 L. to R. James Gilmer, Vince Bell, Ruthie Foster, Eric Taylor & Steven Fromholz, 2004 Kerrville Folk Festival, Houston Night (Photo: Folk Villager)

034 L. to R. Eric Taylor, Steven Fromholz & Vince Bell, Threadgill Theatre, 2006 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

035 Steven Fromholz, Threadgill Theatre, 2006 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

036 Steven Fromholz, Threadgill Theatre, 2006 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

037 L. to R. Eric Taylor, Steven Fromholz & Vince Bell, Threadgill Theatre, 2006 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

038 L. to R. Steven Fromholz, Eric Taylor & Gary Sapone, Threadgill Theatre, 2006 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

039 L. to R. Steven Fromholz, Eric Taylor & Gary Sapone, Threadgill Theatre, 2006 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

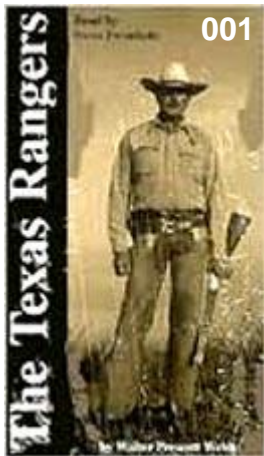
- 040 L. to R. Steven Fromholz, Eric Taylor, Gary Sapone & Vince Bell, Threadgill Theatre, 2006 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
- 041 Steven Fromholz, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
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- 042 L. to R. Eric Taylor, Steven Fromholz & Vince Bell, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
- 043 Steven Fromholz, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
- 044 L. to R. Eric Taylor, Steven Fromholz & Vince Bell, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
- 045 L. to R. Eric Taylor, Steven Fromholz & Vince Bell, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
- 046 Steven Fromholz, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
- 047 Steven Fromholz, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
- 048 Steven Fromholz, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
- 049 Steven Fromholz, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)
- 050 Steven Fromholz, Threadgill Theatre, 2007 Kerrville Folk Festival (Photo: Folk Villager)

Steven Fromholz (1945 - 2014) - A Biography

On Monday 26th May, a Steven Fromholz Memorial Concert will be held at Threadgill Theatre as part of the 2014 Kerrville Folk Festival. A reminiscence of the Memorial Concert will form the fourth and final part of this tribute to the late musician. A Steven Fromholz interview dating from 1986 constitutes Parts 1 & 2, the third part is the following Biography including details of Steven's exploits 1986 - 2014.

While some of what follows is duplicated by the aforementioned 1986 Steven Fromholz interview, I felt that to simply fill in the years post the interview was inadequate.

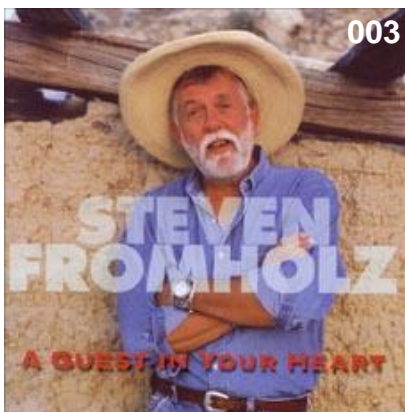
Part 3 – A Steven Fromholz Biography



Steven Fromholz was born in Temple, Texas on 8th June 1945. His Wisconsin born father, Al, worked for the Ford Motor Company. In the mid-eighties Fromholz told me *"We travelled the Mid-West from Wisconsin to Texas until I was 11 years old. It was fun being a kid, living in all those places."* Eventually the family settled in Texas, and Steven attended Denton High School.

Enrolled at North Texas State University in Denton during late 1963, Steven founded the college Folk Club and became its first president. Fellow, musically inclined, students included Michael [Martin] Murphey and Travis Holland. *"While attending College, I married my High School sweetheart. She gave me a banjo as a wedding present. I loved The Kingston Trio, The Limelighters and later Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson."* With Murphey and Patty Lowman, Steven debuted as a paid performer *"We sang at Lions and Qantas Clubs."* Later, Fromholz became a member of the short-lived *Dallas County Jug Band* and the *Dallas County Outpatients*.

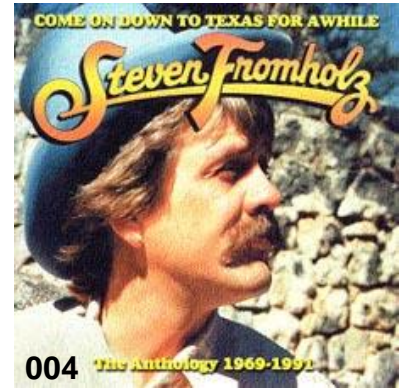
While visiting New Orleans in early 1965, Steven began writing songs and upon his return to Texas decided to become a professional musician. Then a draft notice arrived. *"I was in the Navy till 1968 and spent the last eighteen months in San Francisco. I was in Buffalo Chips with Judy Caldwell. We sang four nights a week in city clubs."* Upon leaving the Navy, Fromholz spent time in Arizona, and then settled in Colorado. *"I was in Denver for a couple of years, Evergreen for two and in Guadio for another couple. I met Dan McCrimmon in a bar downtown, on the third day I was in Denver."* Forming Frummox, Steven and Dan cut the first of a pair of albums. A thirteen-year gap separated the release of those albums.



Titled *HERE TO THERE*, their debut, was produced by ex-Journeyman, Dick Weissman. Released by abc/Probe Records, the eight songs included Fromholz's ten-minute song cycle *Texas Trilogy* and also *Song For Stephen Stills*. By the early seventies, Fromholz was a member of Stills' road band. The group eventually mutated into Manassas. *"I think I have one rhythm track on their first record. I quit the band in the Fall of 1971."*

Post The Monkees, Texan, Michael Nesmith cut a number of critically lauded, country-rock albums. He persuaded Elektra Records to finance his Countryside label. Albums by Garland

Fraday and Red Rhodes were issued, but Fromholz's collection HOW LONG IS THE ROAD TO KENTUCKY was shelved days before its planned release. *"I've got the masters. Michael sent them to me. I'd known Michael since 1965."* Fromholz went on to play clubs in Texas and adjacent states as a solo act. Hooking up with Texas players, and still based in Colorado, he formed Captain Duck and the Farmers Electric Co-op Boys and the Bluebonnet Plague. *"I moved down to Austin, Texas in 1974. I had a market there till 1976 with the progressive country scene. I was with Moon Hill Management and Larry Watkins became my manager."*



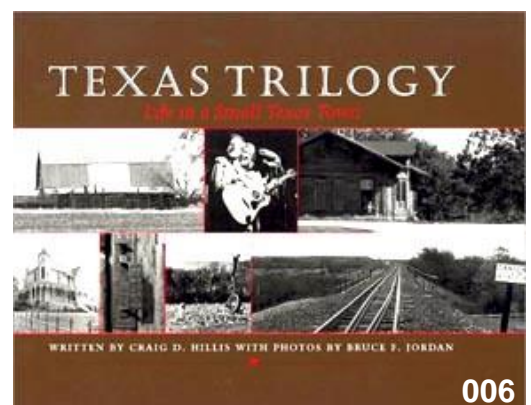
Having secured a recording with the Capitol label, Steven's solo debut A RUMOUR IN MY OWN TIME included *I'd Have To Be Crazy* a # 11 Country Chart single for Willie Nelson during May 1976. His second album FROLICKING IN THE MYTH followed in 1977. Concurrently, Fromholz launched an acting/movie career by first appearing in OUTLAW BLUES [1977] which starred Peter Fonda. Released by the Capitol label Fromholz performed three songs on the movie soundtrack album.



Steven's next studio recording JUS' PLAYIN' ALONG, was released by Willie Nelson's short-lived Lone Star imprint. Forming his own label, Felicity Records, FROMHOLZ LIVE – which amply displayed Steven's music and his between song repartee and wicked sense of humour - was recorded in Austin at Steamboat Springs 1874, a club owned at one stage by Craig D. Hillis. The record label is named after Steven's youngest daughter, Felicity Rose, who was born three days after LIVE was recorded. Felicity issued FRUMMOX II in 1982, with guest players including Dick Weissman and Ramblin' Jack Elliott.

As for Steven's movie career, he appeared in CLOAK AND DAGGER with Dabney Coleman [1984], SONGWRITER with Kristofferson and Nelson [1984] and, finally, the crime thriller POSITIVE I.D. [1987]. While residing in Colorado, Fromholz had acted. *"McCrimmon was stage manager at a Catholic girl's school. They did not have enough men around, so I did a bunch of acting."* During the summer of 1983, Fromholz appeared in the play WILLIE THE SHAKE. *"It was presented at a place outside Austin. I played the head of the Shakespeare Department."* During the summer of 1988 Fromholz took the part of frontiersman, Hugh Glass, in Bobby Bridger's play with music A BALLAD OF THE WEST which ran from June to mid-July in Cody, Wyoming. Due to the historic Yellowstone Fires that year, the cast returned to Texas for a six-week run at Austin's Live Oak Theatre.

LOVE SONGS [1988] was a cassette-only Felicity Records release, as was EVERYBODY'S GOIN' ON THE ROAD [1991] the latter credited to Fromholz and the Almost Brothers. In 1992 Steven narrated the cassette-only charity single *Bald Eagles At Buchanan Lake*. The nine-minute long song was composed by Patricia Long aka Patricia Hardin [Tom Russell's female singing partner during the late nineteen-seventies]. Walter Prescott Webb's book THE TEXAS RANGERS was published by the University of Texas Press during 1965. Featuring stories from Webb's book abridged by Turk Pipkin, Fromholz narrated the two-hour long THE TEXAS RANGERS: AUDIOCASSETTE released by the University of Texas Press during 1994. During that decade and the preceding one, Steven regularly worked in Austin theatre productions, and undertook starring roles in THE NIGHT HANK WILLAIDS DIED,



WOODY GUTHRIE'S AMERICAN DREAM, SWEENEY TODD, A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC and FIDDLER ON THE ROOF.

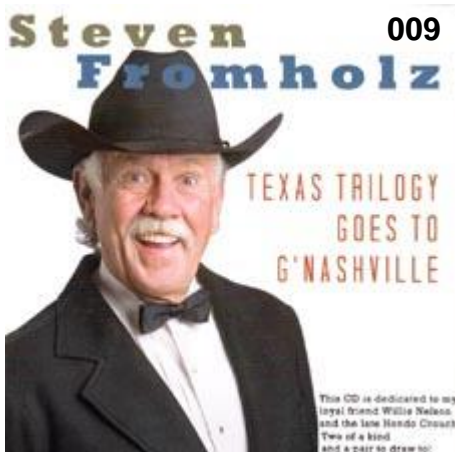


THE OLD FART IN THE MIRROR [1994] was Fromholz's first CD release, albeit on Jerry Jeff Walker's label Tried & True Music. Recorded at The Birchmere in Alexandria, Virginia, his liner note ran to "Here I am again! Steven Fromholz: Up-and-coming middle-aged, stand-up folksinger, specializing in Free-form, Country-Folk-Rock, Science-Fiction, Gospel-Gum Bluegrass-Opera-Cowjazz Music!" Through the latter half of the nineties, in association with Terlingua, Texas based Far Flung Adventures, Steven was actively involved in *skipping* rafting expeditions through the rivers and canyons along the Texas/Mexican border, and also provided each evening's musical entertainment. In 1998 Lyle Lovett released the double CD recording STEP INSIDE THIS HOUSE, a tribute to songwriters who were born, or at one time resided, in Texas. Disc 1 opened with Fromholz's *Bears*, and Disc 2 found Lovett deliver an almost eleven-minute rendering of *Texas Trilogy*. In May 2000 Steven appeared on a Season 25 edition of AUSTIN CITY LIMITS alongside fellow scribes featured on Lovett's tribute recording. Fromholz debuted on ACL in Season 1 [1976] with a whole episode to himself, and the following year split a bill with Guy Clark.

Over the years Steven has regularly reinterpreted his songs, while the Felicity release A GUEST IN YOUR HEART [2000] mainly featured new material. The twenty-two song career retrospective COME ON DOWN TO TEXAS FOR AWHILE – THE ANTHOLOGY 1969 – 1991 [2001] was issued by the Australian imprint Raven Records, followed the same year by LIVE AT ANDERSON FAIR recorded at the famed Houston, Texas songwriter club. Authored by Craig D. Hillis, with photography by Bruce F. Jordan, and published in October 2002 by the University of Texas Press, TEXAS TRILOGY: LIFE IN A SMALL TEXAS TOWN was set in the town of Kopperl, Texas and brought Steven's famed composition to life. The book included interviews with town folk and a CD of the song. LOVE SONGS was upgraded to CD during 2003, released by Felicity, it was re-titled COWJAZZ.



Commencing in 2002 Georgia bred, Texas based singer/songwriter Eric Taylor, accompanied by Denice Franke and David Olney began performing as The Texas Song Theatre, a concert presentation merging song with spoken narrative. Olney subsequently decided to concentrate on his solo career, and was replaced by Steven Fromholz. Around a month after his induction



into the Texas Music Hall of Fame, during April 2003 Fromholz suffered a debilitating stroke, sufficient that post the trauma he had to relearn songs and how to play guitar. Sufficiently recovered, Fromholz booked a limited schedule of live performances early that Fall. Vince Bell, Taylor and Fromholz appeared on the themed Houston Night – Sunday 30th May 2004 - during the annual Kerrville Folk Festival. Taylor suffered a heart attack during late January 2004. The trio of acquaintances soon decided to work together from time to time. With a nod to a certain Lubbock bred trio, Fromholz suggested the name FlatLINers – a reference to each man's life-threatening illness or injury. The trio made its public debut during February 2005 with appearances in Houston at

Anderson Fair and in Austin at the Hyde Park Theatre. The FlatLINers played two-hour long Sundown Concerts at Threadgill Theatre during the 2006 & 2007 Kerrville Folk Festivals. A live 2CD recording was released of their 2006 performance.

A year long appointment, Steven was named the Lone Star state's Poet Laureate in 2007 by Governor Rick Perry and the State Legislature. Toward the close of that year, the Texas Christian University Press published Fromholz's NEW AND SELECTED POEMS. Featuring vocal accompaniment from Willie Nelson *Hondo's Song* had only previously been released in the U.K. on a seven-inch vinyl single during 1981. It was appended to the 1978 Lone Star album and issued by Felicity on CD as TEXAS TRILOGY GOES TO G'NASHVILLE [2011]. The four CD box set CARRY ON [2013] furnished further evidence of Fromholz's time with Dallas born Stephen Stills - another musician, who as a kid, was raised on military bases. Stills' song *Do For The Others* solely featured the two musicians and was credited as such. On Sunday 19th January 2014, Fromholz was fatally shot in a freak accident at the Flying B Ranch near Eldorado, after the rifle he was carrying slipped out of its case, hit the ground and accidentally discharged. Having curtailed his public appearances of late, for five years prior to his passing Steven returned to his roots and had been a rancher.

Album Discography:

as Frummo with Dan McCrimmon - HERE TO THERE [1969]; FRUMMOX II [1982];

with The FlatLINers – Kerrville Folk Festival [2006]:

Solo - HOW LONG IS THE ROAD TO KENTUCKY unreleased [1973]; A RUMOUR IN MY OWN TIME [1976]; FROLICKING IN THE MYTH [1977]; JUS' PLAYIN' ALONG [1978]; FROMHOLZ LIVE! [1979]; LOVE SONGS [1988]; EVERYBODY'S GOIN' ON THE ROAD accompanied by The Almost Brothers [1991]; THE OLD FART IN THE MIRROR [1995]; A GUEST IN YOUR HEART [2000]; COME ON DOWN TO TEXAS FOR AWHILE – THE ANTHOLOGY 1969 - 1991 [2001]; LIVE AT ANDERSON FAIR [2001]; COWJAZZ [2003] a CD reissue of LOVE SONGS; TEXAS TRILOGY GOES TO G'NASHVILLE [2011] a CD reissue of JUS' PLAYIN' ALONG:

Soundtracks – OUTLAW BLUES [1977]:

Spoken Word – THE TEXAS RANGERS [1994]:

Brought to you from the desk of the Folk Villager.

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 10/02, 12/02, 07/03 & 05/14

Photo Credits: Part 3 – A Steven Fromholz Biography

001 Walter Prescott Webb's THE TEXAS RANGERS [1994] cover of audiobook cassette release

002 THE OLD FART IN THE MIRROR [1995] album cover

003 A GUEST IN YOUR HEART [2000], album cover

004 COME ON DOWN TO TEXAS FOR AWHILE – THE ANTHOLOGY 1969 - 1991 [2001], album cover

005 LIVE AT ANDERSON FAIR [2001], album cover

006 Craig D. Hillis, with photography by Bruce F. Jordan TEXAS TRILOGY: LIFE IN A SMALL TEXAS TOWN [2002], book cover

007 COWJAZZ [2003] a CD reissue of LOVE SONGS, album cover

008 Steven Fromholz: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS [2007], book cover

009 TEXAS TRILOGY GOES TO G'NASHVILLE [2011] a CD reissue of JUS' PLAYIN' ALONG, album cover



Photo 001

Steven Fromholz – Kerrville Folk Festival Memorial Concert Review

Part 4 – A Celebration of Steven Fromholz, The Man And His Music

The Sundown Concert on the evening of Monday 26th May during this year's Kerrville Folk Festival was billed as a Celebration of Steven Fromholz, the man and his music. Above, see Bob Livingston's poster for the event. A similar musical celebration took place in Austin at the Palm Door on Sixth, on Sunday 2nd February, two weeks following Fromholz's untimely passing. A couple of months farther along, Kerrville Folk Festival founder Rod Kennedy passed. In 1972, Kennedy selected Fromholz as one of twelve performers for the inaugural Kerrville Folk Festival.



Photo 002

Over the ensuing decades, the Temple, Texas born musician became a Festival regular. Willie Nelson took Steven's "I'd Have To Be Crazy" high in the Country Singles Chart during the summer of 1976. Lyle Lovett included Fromholz's music on his 2CD Texas music celebration *Step Inside This House* (1998). Inducted into the Texas Music Hall of Fame in March 2003, Steven survived a massive stroke a month later. Having relearned to walk, talk, play guitar and sing, he began performing in public again, on his own and as part of The FLATLINERS. In 2007 Steven Fromholz was appointed Poet

Laureate for the State of Texas. During the past handful of years Steven resided and worked on a ranch near San Angelo, Texas.

For the uninitiated, here are a few random insights/Fromholz connections relative to the performers who appeared on Kerrville's Threadgill Theatre stage on 26th May. It's appropriate that we begin with Segle Fry and Bill Hearne, alongside Fromholz, accredited members of Kerrville's 1972 debut dozen. Circa the late 1960's, in Colorado, Fromholz and Mike Williams performed as a duo. When the latter received call-up papers, Dan McCrimmon and Steven formed FrummoX and the rest became.....a legend! (Professor) Craig D. Hillis, musician, entertainment entrepreneur and historian, witnessed first hand the vortex that was the Austin

music scene during the early 1970's and onward. Music legends in their own right Gary P. Nunn and Bob Livingston are, in addition, Lost Gonzo Band alumni, while Fletcher Clark (and Burl Ives cousin) Craig Toungeate were regular Fromholz sideman including a spell as The Almost Brothers. Also very much present on the night were Central Texas/Austin musicians Butch Morgan, Tommy Elskes and Steven Doster, the latter founder of the non-profit Guitars For Swaziland. Hondo Crouch's son-in-law Dow Paterson, became acquainted with Messrs. Fromholz, Williams and



Photo 003

McCrimmon, while serving in the military in Colorado. Walt Wilkins grew up in 1970's Austin listening rooms observing Fromholz & Co. perform, while retired banker Tom Frost was a close buddy of Steven's. Steven's daughters Darcie Jane and Felicity Rose held down roles onstage and backstage. Due to a family commitment, Lost Gonzo alumni John Inmon did not appear.



Photo 004

Rather than regurgitate unremitting lists of who played with whom during the performance of a particular composition, let's just say that, onstage, there was, in the spirit of the 1970's Austin Interchangeable Band, an ever changing cast of stringed-instrument support players during the almost three-hour long concert. Wilkins kicked the show into gear with a couple of selections from Steven's Capitol Records debut *A Rumor In My Own Time* (1976), namely an urgent reading of "Ain't It Nice To Be Alone" followed by the more sedate "Late Night Neon Shadows." Prior to delivering the environmental commentary "Birds &

Wolverines," Butch Morgan recalled a San Antonio gig shared with Steven. Responding to a call of nature during the break, the musicians found themselves standing side-by-side at the porcelain. Instead of staring straight ahead, Fromholz looked over and down and exclaimed "*Oh Butch!*" Recorded for the unreleased Countryside Record album *How Long Is The Road To Kentucky* (1973), "Birds & Wolverines" finally surfaced on *Everybody's Goin' On the Road* (1991). The most obscure of the evening's selections was undoubtedly the Fromholz/Hillis co-write "Think About The Mountains." Covered by the non-Ray Wylie Hubbard incarnation of Three Faces West, it appeared on their sophomore album *Holed Up* (1974), and replete with a mid-song Doster guitar solo, Messrs. Frost and Hillis shared the lead vocal. Written and performed by Steven, Tom offered the 1976 "Frost Bank Jingle," and recalled that years later he informed Steven that "*The advertising agency charged the bank \$10K.*" Steven received \$500 for his efforts!



Photo 005



Photo 006

The secret to a consummate rendition of Steven's cinematic "Texas Trilogy" is timing. Deliver this *Here To There* (1969) Frummox era composition too fast or too slow, and the magic simply vanishes. Before his solo rendition of this classic song suite, Williams recalled hearing it for the first time at The Drinking Gourd in San Francisco on one of the establishment's "10 cent beer nights." He continued "*Four or five chords in, the place went quiet. As the last chord faded, silence. Judy Caldwell came and grabbed him, the applause never stopped.*" Armed with his twelve-string guitar Williams nailed the

song and justifiably received a standing ovation. It's been said on countless occasions that this post-WWII North Texas portrait *perfectly captures* a point in time. There, I've said it again.

In 1981 U.K. based Youngblood Records issued a 7" Fromholz single featuring "Hondo's Song." Three decades later, the tune finally surfaced Stateside appended to *Texas Trilogy Goes To G'Nashville* (2011). Called to the stage by Williams, Dow Paterson recalled a particular Denver Xmas when he introduced Steven to his father-in-law, following which Mike and Dow shared the lead on "Hondo's Song." Next onstage was Dan McCrimmon who was working in a Denver restaurant when "*I began playing bass and harmonica with Steven and Mike.*" From the 1969 Frummox debut Dan rendered "Jake's Song" on his own, and was joined by Bill Hearne for "Kansas Legend." New Mexico based Hearne followed with "Blue Lines On White Linen," to which Segle Fry offered the pre-song insight "*Steven wrote the song in my house on 32nd Street in Austin.*"



Photo 007

Delivered with energetic gusto Fletcher Clark's first vocal contribution, drawn from *Live!* (1979) – the album was recorded at Hillis' Austin venue Steamboat Springs - was the chuckle filled

narrative, "Aunt Minnie And The Bear Rap" and was followed, appropriately, by "Bears" from *A Rumor In My Own Time*. Drawing further from Frummox's back pages Livingston and Hearne duetted on "Man With The Big Hat," Gary P.'s *Jus' Playin' Along* (1978) selection was "She's Everybody's Baby But Mine" and the Gonzo compadres reunited vocally for the slyly worded "Rest Area Waltz" from *Live!* replete with introductory puns "*Bear right*" and, turning the vehicle around, "*Bear left*" relative to spotting, at speed, roadside wildlife. Taking the stage, Steven's oldest daughter Darcie Jane energetically



Photo 008

delivered “Fool’s Gold” from *Jus’ Playin’ Along* and was joined by younger sibling, Felicity Rose, for the ballad “Blue Would I Be.” The latter tune debuted on the cassette-only release *Love Songs* (1988) which was later reissued on CD as *Cowjazz* (2003).



Toungate began his moment in the spotlight with “Knockin’ On Wood,” followed with “Isla Mujeres,” then “Dear Darcie.” In terms of source, the latter *A Rumor In My Own Time* tunes bookended one from *Live!* “Dimmy Jeans Poor Puke Sauce Linkages,” another rib-tickling *Live!* narrative was delivered with subtle nuance by Clark. As an being an Almost Brother, Fletcher co-produced Steven’s 1991 album *Everybody’s Going On The Road* from which he sang the title tune. Stephen Doster’s spot-on rendition of “Can’t Stay

Away” proved to be the seventh selection from the ten-song *A Rumor In My Own Time*. “Cowboy Country Club” appeared on *A Guest In Your Heart* (2000), Fromholz’s final studio release, and was the first offering from Tommy Elskes. “I’d Have To Be Crazy” from *A Rumor In My Own Time* and “Hawkeye” from *Frolicking In The Myth* (1977) followed. With the whole company assembled on the Threadgill stage the tribute concert closed with a heartfelt rendition of “A Little More Holy.” There’s a heartfelt intimacy to Sundown Concerts that’s sometimes missing from Kerrville’s main-stage, and this Celebration of Steven Fromholz was one of those instances. It will live long in my memory.

Possessed of a wicked, irrepressible sense of humour, being within earshot of certain Steven Fromholz lyrics often resulted in laughter induced rib-ache. Then he’d simply lay a thoughtful tune on you that plucked at your heartstrings and brought dampness to the eyes. I was privileged to interview Steven in 1986, and I’ll never forget his openness in playing the entire *Love Songs* album, a release, as it turned out, that wouldn’t see the commercial light of day for another two years. Texas has produced many craftsmen in word and melody, but there will only ever be one Steven Fromholz.

P.S. Darcie and Felicity Fromholz have formed a company called Pinky Shake Productions, watch this space for developments.....

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aka Arthur Wood.

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Photo Credits: Part 4 – Steven Fromholz Memorial Concert

001 2014 Kerrville Folk Festival, Steven Fromholz Memorial Concert poster (Courtesy Bob Livingston)

002 Walt Wilkins opens the show.

003 L. to R. Stephen Doster, Bob Livingston, Tom Frost, Craig D. Hillis & Craig Toungate

004 Mike Williams performs “Texas Trilogy.”

005 Fletcher Clark narrates “Aunt Minnie And The Bear Rap.”

006 L. to R. Dan McCrimmon, Gary P. Nunn & Bob Livingston.

007 L. to R. Darcie Jane Fromholz and Felicity Rose Fromholz in sibling harmony.

008 L. to R. Segle Fry, Fletcher Clark, Stephen Doster, Tommy Elskes, Craig D. Hillis (hidden) , Craig Toungate & Butch Morgan (hidden)

009 L. to R. (Back Row) Dan McCrimmon, Segle Fry, Tommy Elskes, Stephen Doster, Drew Paterson, Craig D. Hillis & Mike Williams (hidden), (Front Row) Felicity Rose Fromholz, Darcie Jane Fromholz, Fletcher Clark, Craig Toungate, Bob Livingston, Bill Hearne, Gary P. Nunn (hidden) and Kerrville Folk Festival Producer, Dalis Allen.