

Jody Carver's
Fender Steel Guitar Club

Dedicated to the Fender Stringmaster and the people who play them.

Fallen Heroes
Gary Boyett

"Some people don't appreciate what they have until it's gone"

Those words were often spoken to me by my Mother when I would complain as a child that I couldn't get that hot new toy or a new bike. I would say things like "well, if I had it then I would appreciate it!" Little did I know that those simple words would come back to me every time I hear that another steel guitar player passes on.

All of you have heard by now about the passing of Jerry Byrd. That comment came back to me while I was reading one of several articles about his great contributions to music and steel guitar. Many times we take for

granted that these people are going to be here forever. All of the great players of days past seem to fade out and we get caught up in the "who's hot today" category and we forget what it was like in the so called old days to just play for the love of music, not just for the money.

I don't need to drop any names in here because we all know at least one person who fits this description.

Next time you are at a jam or a show be sure to spend some time with these guys that have paid those dues for us and listen to their stories, laugh at their jokes and remember to appreciate them before they're gone.

Gary

Weekend at Jody's
HowardR

As we all know, The Steel Guitar Forum is a wonderful place. It was through the forum that I met Jody Carver, "The Knight of Fender Tweed" and we've been friends for several years. Before we ever met in person, we had many phone conversations and emails, mostly having to do with growing up in New York, the places, the people, the events,

and New York humor. We were finally able to meet at the PSGA Show in 2002 and agreed that we would get together again at some point. Since then Jody has been inducted into The Steel Guitar Hall of Fame and his original recording with Johnny Cucci "The Hot Club Of America" has been enjoying a resurgence in popularity and is quite in demand



Jerry Byrd
Born March 09, 1920

Lima, OH

Passed Away

April 11, 2005

Send letters to:

Mrs. Kaleo Byrd

555 University Ave. #707

Honolulu, HI 96826



throughout the steel guitar community.

This past March we were finally able to get together for a weekend. I loaded my Remington Steelmaster into my T100 and headed up north to Milford, Pa. on a rainy Saturday. I hadn't been out of the city in awhile so it was nice to take a ride and be in the country. It was great to see Jody

Volume 1, Issue 4

05/01/05

Jody Carver was unable to write his article this month.

Let's hope next month he can finish his story from March.

We all wish you the best Jody.

For those who missed the post there was no April issue due to new computer problems.

The next newsletter will now be published every other month. Next issue- July 2005

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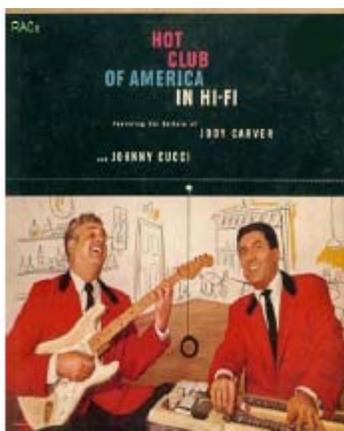
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Jody Carver

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information go to:

<http://rickalexander.com/BigSteel/CD.html>



The Guitar that came home

"The Return of my '49-'50 Fender T-8 Custom. S/N: 0658 (A 24-yr. Trip)"

This story began in 1979 at a Pawnshop on Lower Broadway in Nashville, TN. I was browsing through the shop when it hit my eye! A late '40's/early '50's Fender Triple-8 Custom Steel Guitar. I had wanted one like that for many years, but; this one looked awful! Someone had painted it Bright Red with a brush, smearing paint over all the metal parts! But, it was only \$150 and I thought, having built several steel-

guitars; I could bring this one back from the dead! So, I bought it and went home smiling with my great prize-find! I carefully took it apart in pieces and stripped off all the finish, down to the bare wood and carefully cleaned off all the metal parts. Then I spray-painted it Flat-Black and then thought, I believe I would rather have it shine!

So, I sprayed it with 3 or 4 coats of

clear varathane finish, after I had obtained a Custom-Made Decal in White 'Coca-Cola Script' which reads "The Custom" and placing it on the front of the body along with another decal of a Golden-Eagle. And then, not having a Fender

Decal: I placed a Metal Fender Amplifier Plate in the center of the front. Now this guitar was looking very good to me, even though not exactly

The guitar, cont.

Original! It looked exactly like I wanted it to and with a new set of legs. By now, I probably had a total of about \$225 invested in something I always wanted. This guitar had a good sound for my style of playing on a non-pedal steel-guitar. In 1980, I moved to Honolulu, Hi.

and took this steel along to play. In June of 1980 I decided to move back to Nashville. In 1982, my wife and I decided to move back to my original home-state of Pa., to take care of my aging parents. In 1989, I sold the Custom to a friend of mine, Charlie Newman (formerly-Sleepy Hollow Ranch, Quakertown, Pa.) and moved to Gautier, Ms.. I lost track of my friend Charlie, over the years and had no address or phone number to call. I really wanted to buy back my Black Custom if possible! I have another long-time friend, Tommy Vollmer, in Hamburg, Pa. who knew I was trying to find Charlie in order to attempt to recover my guitar if he hadn't already sold it in the preceding 14-yrs.! Tommy is also a fine steel player and after playing a show in Pa. June 28, '03, he was approached by a fellow who gave his name as Danny Newman. Tommy contacted me over that week-end telling me of his by-chance meeting. I told Tommy the he had actually spoken to the brother of Charlie Newman, the owner of my Fender Custom! By now I was very excited about the contact and was hoping the guitar would still be around and possibly for sale! Tommy offered to go back through a long list of paper-work containing the address of Danny, who he had sent some music-material to some time earlier. I said certainly, please do it. Still more excited! A few days later, Tommy contacted me with an address for Danny which dated all the way back to Nov. 2, '99. I called L.D.I. for a possible current telephone number. Fortunately, Danny still lived at that same address and I was able to obtain his phone-

number. I called the number and spoke with his daughter, giving her my name and phone number to pass on to her Uncle Charlie. This was Thur. July 3, '03. I waited for what seemed like an eternity! Saturday evening at 8:30, the phone rang and when I answered, the voice on the other end of the line said, "this is Charlie Newman". Well, the excitement returned once again! I had my fingers, toes, eyes and possibly my big ears X'd! I said, "Do you still have the Fender Custom"? He said, "Yes, I still have it". I asked if he played it and he said he only set it up and played it once in a while and he never took it out of the house! I knew right then that this guitar was still in great shape since the 1979 refinishing. The exact condition would be depending on how good of a job I had actually done myself, because; apparently Charlie takes as good care of his instruments as I do! Well, it was time for the big-question! I asked, with all extremities still X'd; "would you consider selling the Custom back to me"? Almost without a breath, Charlie said, "sure, it's still your guitar and I wouldn't want to sell it to anyone else"!

I asked how much it would cost to buy it back, and he said "just give back what I paid for it"! I said, "I'll be right there, just as soon as my YUKON can make it up to Pa! _ _ _ _ Well, I left Nashville on Sunday afternoon at 3:00 pm and drove to Pa., arriving Monday Mid-Day and there it was, I©©king as good as ever! I paid him and headed back to Nashville with my '79 "Prize Find". _ _ _ _ As I was passing by Hamburg, Pa. I stopped to visit with my good friend Tommy Vollmer, who played a very important part in the return of my Custom!

I'll never be able to thank him enough! The other very important person who I also met again when I was visiting Charlie was his brother Danny who passed on my message to Charlie. And also thanks to Danny's daughter who took my original request on the phone. _ _ _ _ This story only happens in story-

books. Or does it? To me, it's a modern-day Miracle! I'm one of the happiest guys around these days and NO, the guitar will not be "FOR SALE" again, as long as I can use it! I had been talking about this guitar that got away for 5 or 6 yrs. I even bought new strings for a Triple-Neck about 6-months before I found the guitar, hoping to find it or one like it before long! I actually thought that finding my Black Custom would be next to impossible, when in reality, it was pretty far from it. I doubt if I'll ever top this personal-story! _ _ _ _ Thanks to all parties involved and a very special thanks to Charlie Newman, 'Keeper Of The Key'! (To

Happiness) _ _ _ _ You can see this Black Custom on this Personal

Website:

<http://community.webtv.net/mycustoms/MyGuitarsand> Last year I had all (3)-P/U's rewound by Jason Lollar and now this guitar is sounding even better!

John





Rick's Corner

Rick Alexander

I wasn't too sure what I was going to write about for this installment of Rick's Corner, and I happened to mention that to my friend Mike. Well, let me tell you - he came back with enough suggestions

to write 10 or 12 articles! Basically, he said: "Write about you!" There was a lot more to it than that, but that was the basic gist of it. So I thought, "Jody can do it, Chuck can do it - so can I!"

I always loved music - in 1950 when I was three years old I had a wind-up Victrola and three 78 RPM records - "Mockingbird Hill", "Good Morning Merry Sunshine" and "Open The Door Richard" I played them over and over, and pretty much wore them out. Then when I saw Elvis on The Ed Sullivan Show in 1956, I knew without a doubt what I wanted to do with my life. I started on broomstick, pots and pans and tissue paper comb - but soon progressed to plastic ukulele. My first song was written on a Hawaiian acoustic guitar that a friend of mine had - it was called "I Wish", and it had 3 chords - E, F# and G#, though I didn't know that at the time. I still remember the entire song and I could sing it for you right now, but I won't - it was pretty lame. When I was 10 in 1957, I got my own (spanish) guitar - a \$25 Kay Acoustic. I was on my way! I didn't know how to tune it at first so I made up my own tuning, some kind of weird open D as I recall. I would play it overhand and "bar" it with the fleshy part of the hand below the thumb. I made up some songs and went with that for a while - until somebody showed me how to tune it and showed me a few chords. Things progressed from there until a few years later when I was 15, I worked in a gas station all summer and got a Harmony Stratotone Guitar and a Harmony Amp for \$50 each - big money in 1962!

So the natural course was to get a band together and play dances and parties. A few years later, in 1964 we had the top band in town called "The Fortune Tellers" and a manager who was also a concert promoter. He brought in acts like The Dave Clark 5 and Bo Diddley and put us on as the opening act. Then in April of 1965 he brought in the fledgling Rolling Stones and we opened for them as well. We hung out some with Mick and Keith and the late Brian Jones. That concert was bedlam - girls screaming, everybody totally out of control. A man named Joe Woodhouse who worked for Capitol Records was at the concert and he really liked us. He wasn't a big exec, he was just the distributor who went around to record stores - but he knew a few people. He became our manager for about a year and we recorded an album's worth of songs for Capitol that was never released. The best thing he did for us was get us on a tour with Roy Orbison. There were 3 opening acts for that tour, and we usually went on first. We got to meet Roy a few times and hang out with him



Rick (hat) & Rob Grill (mic)

some. I can remember every word of every conversation I had with him. Once I asked him, "Roy, how do you always hit those notes every time and never miss?" He looked at me through those dark glasses and said, "CONFIDENCE, BOY - CONFIDENCE". Words to live by.

When Roy took the stage it was like magic. He just stood still and sang the songs, as perfectly as on his recordings. The emotions in his songs were palpable and just kind of reached out and grabbed you by the heart. Every night I would stand out in the crowd to listen to him, and it was impossible to stop the lump in my throat or the tears welling up in my eyes. No other singer has ever had that effect before or since.

I thought we were on our way to stardom, but of course the band broke up and I lost touch with Joe Woodhouse, Capitol Records, Roy Orbison, Brian Jones and all the rest. There was nothing else to do then but become a hippie musician and reject society's values and write weird songs. I did that for a few years, playing in various bands - blues bands, rock bands, country bands etc., or sometimes playing solo with an amplified acoustic guitar. I always did okay - I'd learn all the right songs, play 'em and sing 'em. It was either that or work for a living, and to me the choice was clear. I traveled a lot in the 60s and 70s playing clubs and concerts.

Then in 1979, I met Rob Grill of The Grass Roots who was putting together a new "Roots" to tour the US and Canada. I toured with The Grass Roots for a couple of years - everywhere USA. It was a great gig, but after a couple of years playing and singing the same 22 songs I'd had enough. We parted amicably; I wound up in Florida and became a redneck/cowboy. I put a Country & Rock band together and called it "The Rick Alexander Band", just to make sure I wouldn't forget the name. We did real well in the early 80s, tearing it up in honky tonks, fairs and expos all around the southeast. We opened shows for George Jones and John Anderson. We did some recording and even had a local hit with a song called "Everything You Do". One of the guys in the band was a "multi-instrumentalist" - he played guitar, sax and piano. Not to be outdone, I got myself some harmonicas and a mandolin - and my first Steel Guitar.



Actually it was two steel guitars - a Fender Dual Professional and a Fender Champion. I paid \$75 for the Dual Pro and \$50 for the Champion. The guy just wanted them out of his store. His exact words were, "Get these crappy things out of my store". I had no clue how to tune them or play them correctly, and I didn't know anyone who did. So, I made up my own tunings - DGDGBE for the Champion, and A aug 9th & some kind of E7th for the Dual Pro. I played them at the gig that very night, and we didn't get fired or run out of town. Fortunately for me, people used to get really wasted in those days. About the 2nd or 3rd night I had them at the gig, a feller from Nashville who said he was a Steel Player came in and wanted to sit in. I asked him if he could play my Dual Pro and

Rick's cont.

he just said, "No". He proceeded to set up his Emmons PSG and blew us all away. His name was Neil Flanz.

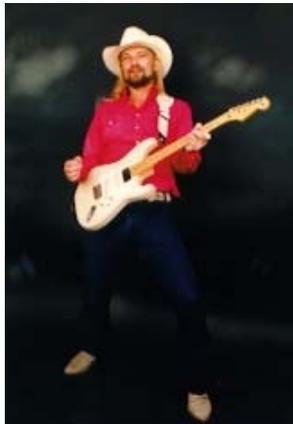
Neil stayed in Florida for the next 20 years, mostly free-lancing. He worked with me on numerous occasions, and never failed to deliver the goods. Neil is unquestionably one of the best Pedal Steel Players on the planet.



I started working as a solo performer again in the late 80s, first with a guitar and drum machine - I had a separate pickup installed that picked up the lower 3 strings and routed them through a Harmony Machine set to 1 octave lower so I could play rudimentary bass lines along with the chords and riffs. Then later on I graduated to backup tracks that I created using Cakewalk/Sonar or Cubase. All this time I would noodle steel licks into my mixes, but I didn't know any other non-pedal steelers, I was completely on my own in the how-to department.

After a while I put together my own recording studio, and focused more and more on recording my own material. I produced CD projects for clients for the first few years, but that got old and I phased it out in favor of concentrating on my own stuff. I recorded CDs and sold them at shows, local stores and the Internet.

Then in early 2004, I really became obsessed with Steel Guitars. I started collecting them, playing them constantly, and learning all I could from tutorial videos and DVDs. I saw Robert Randolph on TV, and although I'm not too interested in either playing Pedal Steel or the kind of music he plays - it struck me that there is no reason a Steel Guitar Player can't be up front. Singing, moving around, being the focus of the show. So



that's what I've been doing. I still play regular guitar at shows - about 50/50. I use my own backup tracks and I do almost all original material.

My latest songs feature Steel Guitar prominently in the mix, and I've done a lot of experimenting with techniques for recording Steel. I don't play Pedal Steel for two reasons - because for me, non-pedal is more expressive and personal, and because I don't want to sit down. As Zeb Carver once said to his young son - it looks like you're playing a typewriter.

I've noticed on Steel Guitar Forum that the number one gripe of Steelers is the lack of attention paid to Steel - the Steel is the first to get dropped when it's time to downsize, Guitar Players step all over them, people don't even really know what a Steel Guitar is, and don't appreciate how much musicianship goes into playing Steel. These are all legitimate beefs to be sure, and maybe something needs to be done about it.

Well, the best way to get attention on stage is to be the singer - and the best way to make sure you don't get dropped is to be the leader. These are two things that I've always done - for many years before I became really serious about Steel Guitar. I have the utmost respect for anyone who achieves mastery, or even proficiency on Steel Guitar - it has to be one of the most difficult instruments to play and not sound horrible. If life was fair, Steel Players would be the stars - singers & guitar players would take a back seat and work around them. But life is anything but fair.

So we have to take compensating measures. If you don't sing, hook up with somebody who does. And look up and smile, be animated. You don't have to stand up to play - but it's a lot more "show-bizzy" if you do. Jerry Byrd often did when he played console, Leon did, Jody did at one time, and a lot of the Hawaiian guys do. If you sit back there to play, people might think you're playing a keyboard - they don't know. . One way or another, you have to show 'em!

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Weekend, cont.

again and the first thing we did was sit down and have some lunch. I brought up some good old fashioned NY pastrami, seeded rye bread, potato salad and cole-slaw. We ate, laughed, and told stories for awhile and then Jody showed me around his very nice house.

We went upstairs where Jody has his music room on one side of the house. On the other side of the house he showed me Marilyn's sewing room. One of the things I regret was not having met Marilyn. I had spoken with her at various times on the phone. She was a soft spoken, well spoken, wonderful lady who was also very talented. Marilyn was an artist with fabrics, colors, and a designer with creative ideas. We spoke of these things and being in the trimming business I understood the things she spoke of. I could appreciate her ideas. She had a remarkable sensibility about her. As Jody showed me her room and her work, I realized that she was more talented than she let on. She made the most amazing, pillows, pottery, bedspreads, quilts, covers, and just so many little things and works of art. She had a feel for color and composition. Her 65 year old sewing machines looked as if they were brand new. I could feel her spirit there. It was a happy spirit. It showed in her work.

You could probably spend an entire month in Jody's music room, and not see everything there. It is like a museum chocked full of photographs, posters, banners, record albums, cassettes, cd's, memorabilia, artifacts, gifts, etc. There's a lot of history there, and that's not including his guitars and amps. In the center of the room sits Jody's Fender Custom T8.

Now it's one thing to hear the music and quite another thing to see the wizardry in person. When Jody sits down to play, it's almost like a conductor leading the orchestra. His hands are all over the place. Hands all over frets and necks. Fingers doing this thing and that thing. Wrists bouncing up, down, and all over. Arms swaying back and forth. And the music flows. Jody coaxes a variety of sounds that enhances his music. The embellishments of notes and sounds is more than one dimensional. And that was just tuning one neck! I really was in awe watching him play.

I ran downstairs to unload the Steelmaster and get my dobro. I set up the Steelmaster and we (he) tuned the necks to his identical tunings. I will have to say that Jody did fall in love with the Steelmaster, commending Herb Remington, who he has never met, on such a finely built steel. Come to think of it, wouldn't it be great if

these two were to ever record together? Well, Jody was enthralled and played tunes like, Idaho, Caravan, Steelin' The Moonlight, I'll Never

Smile Again, and more. He showed me the reasoning for his tunings and how his set up uses economy of motion in jumping the necks to get the chords. He showed me and taught me a little of Limehouse Blues. Before we knew it, it was time to go out and grab some diner before the town closed down. We drove into town and had some diner at the local diner. We had some fun with the waitress and drove her just a little crazy.



Returning to the house, we headed straight up to the music room. Jody had never played a dobro and was curious about mine, so he sat down with it and played around. It was different for him and he liked the way it sounded. It was fun for him, a novelty. After awhile, he handed it to me and said "Play something." Great, he had previously ripped through a variety of tunes all over three necks and here I am, a tinkerer with a mere six strings. So, I played my bastardized version of Malaguena, trying to incorporate or emulate effects that would liven up the tune. I knew that Jody would like the rakes, harmonics, and percussive techniques, so I used them as best I could. He liked it. Then I played "Dark Eyes" and Jody's eyes lit up. He started to sing to it. I didn't even know that there were ever lyrics to this old traditional Russian piece that is a national anthem for Gypsy players. He liked it so much that I ran down to my truck and brought back some cd's of Gypsy Jazz artists. Jody was knocked out by them and loved it. We then listened to a variety of recordings and sessions that Jody played on as I listened to his stories and remembrances of his early days. Before we knew it, it was 1:30 in the morning.

Sunday morning turned out to be a decent day. It had finally stopped raining. We had a leisurely breakfast and it was nice to look out the window and see trees instead of looking down at garbage trucks. After a second cup of coffee, back to the music room. It was like a clubhouse. We took some funny photos that we had planned out the previous day and had a load of laughs doing that. As Jody was working on a tune and I was starting to pack up, the phone rang. I asked Jody if I should get it and he said sure. I do believe that I was the last person that Smiley Roberts ever intended to speak to when I picked up the phone. I couldn't believe it and neither could he. We had some laughs and then I put Jody on.

So, the time came when I had to pack up the Remington and the dobro. It was a wonderful time. It will be a time that I will always remember and cherish. I look forward to visiting Jody again, and perhaps he can come out to Long Island and visit with me. That would be fun. I'll keep the Steelmaster plugged in.

Howard