

TIME LINE

Joel & Earleen Aderhold

1963 (Learning To Play)

A school friend's Father, Ralph Hutchins used to play on radio in Lawrenceville, Ga. with his brothers. It was probably a fifteen minute live show like so many small radio stations had at that time. He traveled in his line of work and came home from a trip one day with a pawn shop type guitar and gave it to his son Bill, my friend. Bill started learning chords from his Dad. I remember his dad playing and singing the old song "Just Because". This was during the folk music revival. Hootenanny was on television which I watched and was exposed to groups like the New Christy Minstrels, the Kingston Trio, and Peter Paul and Mary. This was my first up close exposure to string music. Prior to that my interest was in early rock n' roll, Elvis, Ricky Nelson, Fats Domino, and Jerry Lee Lewis, etc. I had always enjoyed music. My very earliest exposure to music was choir music in church at Indian Creek Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Ga. My Mother would teach me the words to songs and I would sing solos in church at around five years of age.

What musical talent I have comes from my Mother. She played the piano by ear. Her father bought a piano for her older sister and paid for lessons. Her sister didn't have a real passion for playing the piano but my Mother did. She would go into the front room of the house where the piano was and work for hours learning to play by ear. She was probably around 12 or 13 at this time. Up until she died she was able to play most anything she heard by ear. She ended up with the old family piano in her basement. Each day she would go down and play hymns for about thirty minutes. My daughter Maggie, who currently plays with her husband Brian Stephens, in the Donna Hughes Band and several other musical configurations has the old piano.

Mom had access to a borrowed guitar and maybe a ukulele during her growing up years. After my friend Bill started to play, I expressed interest to her in learning to play a stringed instrument. She suggested the ukulele would be very easy to learn and she could help me. My Dad took me to Clark Music in Decatur and purchased a little ten dollar ukulele and a song book of Stephen Foster songs with chords. Mother began to help me learn the chords. She would sit with me in the back yard swing at sunset and we would sing those old songs as I was learning to play the chords and hearing when to change. This is one of my fondest memories of growing up.

While the ukulele was easy to make chords on, I wanted something more challenging and something my friend Bill and I could play together. He was playing guitar so I guess just from seeing Hootenanny on television, the logical choice was a banjo. I found banjos in the Sears Christmas catalog. I didn't have a clue which one to buy. There were four string banjos and five string banjos. It just made sense to me that a four string would be easier to learn than a five string...one less string to worry about. So Mom and Dad got me a little open back Silvertone tenor banjo for Christmas in 1963.

1964

Nobody around knew anything about a tenor banjo. Most folks did know a little more about 5 string banjos. I felt I had really messed up asking for a tenor banjo. Mom remembered that Harold Shumate, a cousin by marriage, had a grandfather, Mr. Henry Shumate who played a banjo. He used to play for square dances in the community. They still had his old banjo, about an 1890's vintage open back with a busted skin head and ebony "friction" pegs (like a fiddle). I borrowed the banjo, cleaned it up, and took it to Park Hall, a repairman, at Dekalb Musicians Supply in Decatur for a fresh skin head. First thing that happened even before I got home was one of the friction keys slipped and the string snarled like a back lash on a bait casting reel. I had no idea how to tune it back and what was to keep that from happening again? So, it was back to Dekalb Musicians Supply to invest in a set of friction but at least "mechanical"

Time Line, page 2

steel friction tuners. My Dad was really thrilled about that after just having paid for the new head and set up.

From Dekalb Musicians Supply, I found out about a medical student at Emory, Bert Levy who gave banjo lessons. I hooked up with him and met him the next Saturday in music room of one of the old halls over at Emory. My Dad drove me over. I was 15 at the time. He opened up his banjo case. It was a nice plush lined hard shell case. I'll always remember the pink lining. He pulled out an RB 250 raised head Gibson Mastertone. He put on his picks and played a few warm up rolls, then proceeded to tell me I was going to learn "Scruggs Style" banjo. I thought "Do what?" I had heard the Beverly Hillbillies Theme and knew that it was some group called Flatt and Scruggs that did the music. I was under the impression that both this guy Flatt and the other guy Scruggs had to both be playing wide open on at least two banjos to get all those notes that I heard in that theme. I was amazed when he cut loose on a few bars of the "Ballad of Jed Clampett". I was both excited about the possibility of learning to play like that, while at the same time having serious doubts about getting my fingers to move that quickly. He sent me off to Dekalb Musicians to find National finger picks and a clear plastic Dobro thumb pick. He wrote some rolls down on a yellow legal pad and the formulas for constructing major and minor chords.

I took three lessons from Bert Levy then found out he was transferring to Duke. He was pleased with my progress and said that with what he had taught me and a lot of practice I would be able to get it. I began to buy 45 RPM singles and EP's (with 4 songs). That was about the only way to learn at the time unless you lived near someone who played. The only instructional book available was by Pete Seeger and it wasn't very good. One of the first records I got hold of was a Flatt and Scruggs EP with Earl's Breakdown, Flint Hill Special, Jimmie Brown the Newsboy, and Dim Lights and Thick Smoke. The 45's were great to learn by. They could be slowed to 33 and still be comprehensible. Mother sat for hours with me with a little portable record player picking the needle up and moving it back to repeat licks and breaks. She especially liked the guitar work on Jimmie Brown The Newsboy. She said she really liked the little soft jingling sound in the background on the G7th chord. By this time Flatt and Scruggs were coming on television on Saturday nights. I could see that the little jingling sound my mother liked was coming from Earl's finger pick on his first finger brushing down on the strings. I came up with a borrowed guitar and with my mother's help and patience we undertook learning Jimmie Brown the Newsboy. That was probably her favorite tune I learned to play.

1965

After playing around the house learning for about a year and a half, I met Benji Johnson at my uncle's gas station in Stone Mountain. Benji played 5 string banjo and had a Gibson bowtie RB-250 raised head that I later bought from him. He lived in Pine Lake and I lived in Clarkston. I had heard him play on one occasion but had not met him. He played with a group called the Pioneers. They were all local guys who played square dances and local get togethers. They practiced once a week on Thursday nights at different members' homes. Benji invited me over to sit in with them one night. They were playing at the home of someone who enjoyed their music and had invited them over. I went over and was surprised to find a house full of people. That was my first experience playing with a bass and I was amazed at how much easier that made playing. The bass player was Tim Talton. Tim and I both attended school at Clarkston, but he was about six years older. Coolidge Bradford played guitar, Sam Ware played guitar, Bob Bradford (Coolidge's brother) strummed on a mandolin, Leonard Pickens played fiddle, and Leslie Osborne played snare drum. Two banjos in a group seemed a little strange but I believe Benji, who also played plectrum banjo wanted to pursue that style of playing and saw me playing with the

group as a way for him to move on without hard feelings with other band members. He soon left and started working at Shakey's Pizza Parlors, playing plectrum banjo, ragtime piano tunes, and sing alongs. That was a good gig for him for several years. Earleen and I used to enjoy going there and hearing him play. It was a great atmosphere.

It was good experience playing square dances with the Pioneers. You have to play tunes 'til you feel like your fingers are going to fall off. Playing solos repeatedly helps to develop playing with different rolls, phrasing, and at different neck positions. But the greatest lesson is timing. The square dance caller insists on good timing and a steady speed, two of the most important aspects of playing good music.

We used to go on a couple of bus trips each year to Nashville with this group and later with another group that followed. B. C. Wilson and Miller Hines were two Southeastern Stages bus drivers who would get up a couple of charter trips every year to the Grand Ole Opry. We would get to go along "no charge" to provide entertainment for the travelers on the bus and in the hotel ballroom after the Opry. B. C. Wilson lived in the same community as George English. He introduced George to us and soon George was playing guitar and singing tenor with the Pioneers.

1966

Tim Talton, George English, Leonard Pickens, and I wanted to get away from the square dance gigs and try for more balance between instrumentation and vocals. With the addition of Louis Ellis on lead vocals we formed the Green Valley Boys in 1966. We began to work on harmony. Leonard had played with Walter Butler in the past and could hear all of the harmony parts. I learned to sing the baritone or third part as we called it from Leonard's instruction. With this group we played many local gatherings and the Georgia Mountain Fair in Hiawassee. This was during the days of the big circus tent and before bluegrass festivals.

1968

Tim, George, and I went to the regular all weekend picking parties that Walter Butler would put on in his home in Pine Lake and later in Clarkston after he moved. It was there we met Roy Fowler. Roy was originally from Mountain Rest, S. C. He lived in Forest Park and worked for the FAA. Roy was a very accomplished mandolin player. A very talented individual with an engineering mind, he built his own F style mandolins and machined tools to automate the production of his mandolins. We formed the group The Blue Ridge Gentlemen in 1968. We wanted to work hard on harmony singing. George had a voice in the same range as Bobby Osborne. We started to stack some of our vocal arrangements with George singing lead on top, me singing the part below him, and Roy or Tim singing the next part down. On some arrangements I would sing lead, George would sing tenor, and Roy would sing baritone. On weekends we played all over the southeast. We usually traveled in an old bus Roy had refurbished. In 1968, we played on the fourth bluegrass festival in Berryville, Virginia. . The first two were in Fincastle, Virginia in '65 and '66 and then Carlton Haney moved the festival to Berryville in '67 (which Tim and I attended, but didn't get to play) We played the first Lavonia, Georgia bluegrass festival in 1969. There were so many festivals, The Cobb Bluegrass Festival (a couple of times each year), Cordele Bluegrass Festival,

Time Line, page 4

Bullsboro Bluegrass Festival, Lawtey Florida Bluegrass Festival, and numerous other Florida bluegrass festivals. We played a television show on WTBS that Lee Williams produced. I believe it was called Fun Fest.

1969

In 1969 we cut a 45 RPM record at Bobby Whitley Studios on Bethesda School Rd. in Lawrenceville. Roy knew fiddler Joe Greene from Highpoint N.C. We cut “My Little Georgia Rose” and “Old Joe Clark”. Joe suggested that we do something different other than going to the 7 chord on the chorus, so we went with a 6 minor. I was never too sure about that, but it was different. The thing I remember most about that session was that I was sick with bronchitis and had a hard time trying to sing.

1971

We were practicing one night and one of the band members had heard about a fiddlers convention in Denver, N. C., not far from Statesville. The convention was coming up the next weekend and it was suggested that we go and enter the competition. We decided to go and give it a shot. The convention was held in a little country school auditorium that had classrooms along the sides. We were in one of those rooms warming up when someone came to me and said “You need to check out the group on stage.” Looking toward the stage I saw to my eye the prettiest red head I had ever seen. If that wasn’t enough, as a bonus, she was playing banjo with her sister and dad. I later found out after swapping our “My Little Georgia Rose” record for her “Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain” record that she was from Statesville, N. C.. Her family played at fiddler’s conventions and trailer sales events in the area. That night we won the first place band ribbon, but the greatest prize was I met my future bride. I immediately started encouraging our band members to enter the competition at the Union Grove Fiddlers Convention that was to be held about three weeks later. Union Grove is only a short drive north of Statesville. Funny, we didn’t even make the cut at Union Grove, but the pretty red head was a nice consolation prize.

1972

The Blue Ridge Gentlemen released their first LP album, “Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Bluegrass” we recorded at Bobby Whitley’s studio on Bethesda School Road in Lawrenceville. Everything was cut live. We continued to play festivals almost every weekend.

September 2, 1972 Earleen and I were married in a small ceremony at Mountain Creek Baptist Church, Rutherfordton, N.C.

1973

Around the end of 1973 I left the Blue Ridge Gentlemen. Earleen had started to play bass and we wanted to work together musically. I enjoyed the time with Roy, George, and Tim, and we all continued to be friends until they passed away. Don Norman took over the banjo duties and played with George, Roy, and Tim regularly for eight to ten more years. They recorded two more albums. Roy passed away in February 1996, Tim in June 1996, and George in October 2004. Jack Poston shot a video tape at the annual fundraiser at Everett’s Barn in June of 2003. That video was probably the last recording of George. In the video was George, Roger Everett, Bobby Autry, Don Norman, my son in law Brian Stephens, and me.

1974

Earleen had begun to play bass after we were married in 1972. We formed a group called All Points South with H. T. Bush on mandolin, Benny McWaters on guitar, and David Adams on dobro. We played at local events, restaurants, and festivals for a year or two.

1975

Earleen and I started to play with J. N. and Onie Baxter and their group The Blue Grass Five. Mac Farley who played banjo had stopped playing and I don't recall who was playing bass. I believe Howard McGuire, who was their first bass player, had already left. Ron Norman played bass with them on occasions. We played a lot of festivals, church functions, local events and a number of company functions. We got connected to a local booking agent who would call any time he got a call for a bluegrass band. Those were good gigs. We got paid well, didn't have to drive far, and didn't have to spend the night away from home. Get in and get out jobs as we referred to them. We got booked at the Rich's Harvest Sale a couple of years. They roped off the street in front of the downtown and had street merchants selling produce and crafts. Cloggers and square dancers were of course present.

1976

In 1976 or 1977 Earleen switched from the upright bass to electric bass. The acoustic bass in those days was difficult to get mic'd well enough on stage to be heard, and transporting a big dog house bass was challenging. We found that carrying the electric bass with a small amp was easier to get around, and we could crank the volume up as much as necessary to be able to hear it over a noisy crowd. Some people complained at first about the change but it worked well for us so we stuck with it. In 1976, with the Blue Grass Five, we were in the WSB Salute To America 4th of July Parade. We rode on a float, playing all the way down Peachtree. After the parade we entertained at a luncheon for some of the television actors and celebrities who participated in the parade. Also, along about this time we played a couple of functions for Tom Murphy, Georgia Speaker of the House. At least one of the occasions was a birthday party. Tom was a good sport. He always wanted to get up and sing a song with us. I believe "Your Cheatin' Heart" was his big number. We also played the annual wild hog dinner for the Georgia State Legislators a time or two. We provided entertainment for New Gingrich's kick off barbeque when he launched his campaign for U. S. House Representative from Georgia.

1977

In the summer of 1977 Earleen and I built a new house. We decided it would be fun to have a pickin' in our basement on New Years. On December 31, 1977 we had our first New Years Pickin' in the basement of our home in Stone Mountain, Ga.. We invited fellow musicians and friends who enjoyed listening. This started a tradition that we have kept going for many years, except for just a few years we missed around 1980 through 1982.

1979

In June of 1979, Maggie, our first child was born. We had held the New Years Pickin' in our basement in 1977 and 1978. The crowd had grown to the point that our basement wasn't big enough. In 1979 we moved our get together to the Mountain View Community Center, an old one room school house on Redan Road. It was located across the street from Mountain View Baptist Church where we were members. That year, consumer VHS video recorders and cameras became available. We wanted to

preserve memories of family members and our kids growing up so we purchased a home VHS recorder and video camera. These first generation cameras required a lot of light. Getting a good picture indoors was difficult. Nevertheless, we set up lights at that the get together on Saturday night, Dec. 29th, 1979 and recorded the event. There is a lot of dead time on the tape, and much unrehearsed playing, but at least some quality of the appearance and sound of those present was preserved. J. N. and Onie Baxter, Don Norman, Tim Talton, Curtis Whitman, and Earleen, and others were present, including some cloggers. Earleen and I had worked up a corny comedy routine that we used a few times on shows. She would get on my shoulders with a long gaudy dress that would come down to my knees. She ended up about 10 feet tall. Her name was Boney Fenderbuster, and was Onie Baxter's sister in the skit. She had always been jealous of Onie because Onie had beaten her time and won J. N.'s affection. We recorded that skit on video tape. Maggie, our six month old baby daughter, was on this tape. She was sitting on the front row and paying particular attention to the cloggers. As she grew older, clogging just seemed to come natural to her, as did playing the bass and singing. She won the clogging contest at this fall's Georgia Mountain Fair Fiddlers Convention, 2009.

1983 to Present

In 1983, when our second child, Adam, was ten months old and Maggie was four, we decided to have a New Years Pickin in the community of Gilkey, N. C., Earleen's parents, Earl and Florree Arrowood lived there and also played music. This became an annual event, and this year will be the 27th annual . Gilkey is about five miles north of Rutherfordton, N. C.. Since we visited there often and usually played music while there, we had made many friends and decided we wanted to put something on that the folks in the community could attend, as well as those from the Atlanta area who would enjoy the trip up every year. The Pickin' has been a combined effort of Earleen's parents, and sister Joan Dowdle and her husband Johnny. Earleen's Mother passed away in April of 2008. This past year was the first Pickin' without her. We cook for the crowd every year which averages between 250 and 300 people. The event has always been held at the Gilkey Community Center. Much good music has been made at these get togethers over 27 years. Ralph Lewis and his sons, Tom McKinney, Eric Ellis, Jason Burleson, Jeff Davis, Horace Scruggs, Jim Rollins, George English, Don Norman, Roy Fowler, Tim Talton, J. N. and Onie Baxter, Herb Green, Howard Coffee, Jim Street, Mike Street, Kevin Street, Glenn Bowman, Perry Woody, L. W. Lambert, Maggie and Brian Stephens, and so many more have participated over the years.

1991 to Present

Around 1991, as our children grew and got busy with activities, Earleen and I cut back on weekend travel. We started a group called "Maple Ridge" with Bobby Cleland on guitar, and Clint Childers on mandolin. We wanted to play events closer to home. We have enjoyed playing together since, and still get together and play today.

2000 to Present

Around 2000 I began to play jobs with Phil Tanner and The Skillet Lickers. The group consists of Phil Tanner, guitar & fiddle, Russ Tanner, fiddle, Brian Morgan, mandolin, Fleet Stanly, dobro, and Doug Landress, bass. Phil's grandfather was Gid Tanner who formed and played fiddle with the Skillet Lickers in the 1920's and cut many records in the 20's and 30's. His recording of Down Yonder sold a million copies. Many early country music performers such as Maybelle Carter credit the Skillet Lickers as an influence in their musical development. We currently play every Wednesday at The Harvest Table, a restaurant in Dacula, Ga. from 6:30 til 8:30. Phil has music every Friday night in a converted chicken house on the home place of his grandfather, Gid Tanner.

Present

Earleen and I currently live in Loganville, Ga. We stay pretty busy with our business, and don't have as much free time for music on the weekends as we once did. We still enjoy playing with Maple Ridge and the Skillet Lickers. Our son Adam and his wife Elizabeth have blessed us with two lovely grand daughters whom we are working on spoiling. They are expecting another little girl in March, 2010. Adam plays guitar and enjoys singing around the house. We are enjoying observing our daughter Maggie, and her husband Brian Stephens pursue their musical interests. They are both very accomplished musicians, Brian on guitar, and Maggie on acoustic bass. They have won many contests over the years including the SPGMA band contest, and the Georgia Mountain Fair state band contest numerous times, along with Brian's many individual instrument ribbons. They are currently playing with the Donna Hughes Band. This summer they recorded an album at Hilltop Studios in Nashville. The project was produced by J. D. Crowe. Earleen and I enjoyed visiting the session where they were recording with Adam Steffey, Scott Vestal, Aubrey Haynie, Barry Bales and others. Maggie and Brian are both teachers. She received her Doctorate in Education in May of this year, and Brian just completed his Masters degree. They are expecting a baby girl in June 2010.

God has richly blessed Earleen and me with a wonderful family and the opportunity to meet many friends through the small measure of musical talent he loaned us.