

JANUARY-FEBRUARY, NO. 13, 1991

# BLUES LETTER



HENRY TOWNSEND

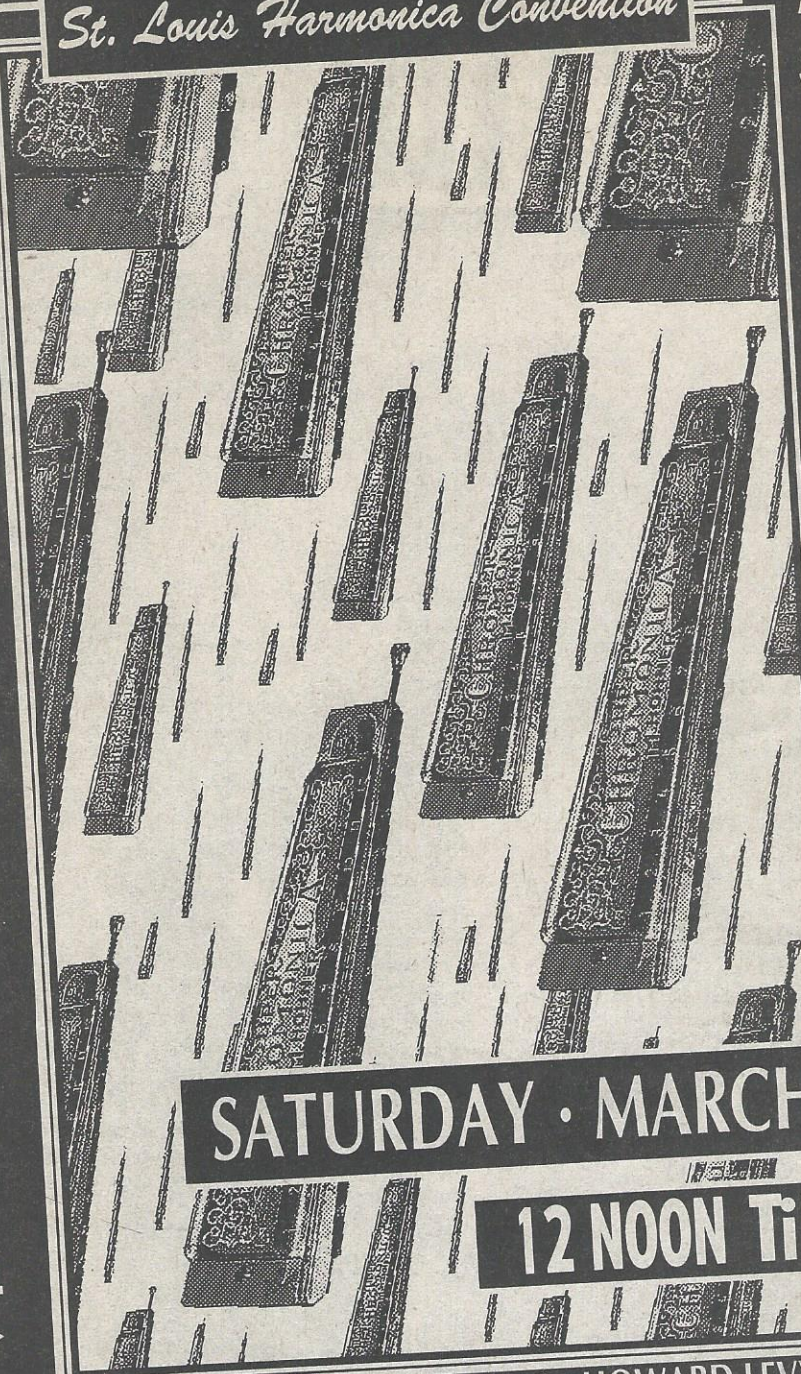
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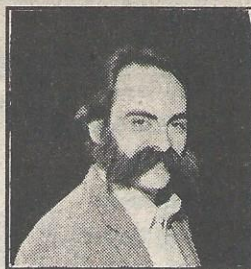
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*The ST. LOUIS BLUES SOCIETY is a Missouri non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving Blues music, fostering its growth and appreciation, and to providing Blues artists the opportunity for public performance and individual improvement in their field, all for the educational and artistic benefit of the general public.*



**Ron Edwards**

## CHAIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Greetings this new year.

If you have been wondering what has happened to all of us at the St. Louis Blues Society, rest assured that we are alive and well and have been working hard on a number of endeavors in the last few months.

The one thing that has kept us most involved since the close of the St. Louis Blues Festival last September is a complete reorganizational effort of the Blues Society. Those changes include:

- A revised set of extensive by-laws that now reflect our newly expanded organization.
- A newly revamped committee structure designed to make the day-to-day operation of the Blues Society more efficient. Committees are open to the general membership of the Blues Society and we encourage any interested member to glance at the list of committees on page (4) and get involved.
- A newly expanded board of directors that now include five new members (see related story on page 10). The board now consists of 16 dedicated blues lovers who meet on a monthly basis.
- A new location of the Blues Society offices now at 700 S. Broadway. The new phone number is 241-BLUE. Our new mailing address is PO Box 78894, St. Louis, MO 63178.
- A change on the administrative front. We have eliminated the positions of president and vice-president and created a board chairman position.
- A commitment to publish the Bluesletter six times per year with an enlarged staff of talented writers and editors.
- The creation, along with the Missouri Historical Society, of a permanent St. Louis blues' archives collection to be housed in the History Museum in Forest Park (see related story on page 7). This is a massive endeavor, which we're all very excited about, to document and preserve St. Louis blues history.
- Planning for the second annual Blues Festival to be held this fall.
- The commitment to continue to produce concerts throughout St. Louis that are devoted to offering the best in blues music.
- The continuation and expansion of the acclaimed Blues in the Schools Program. Our first program of the year will take place Feb. 22 at the Jefferson Elementary School and will featured veteran bluesman Willie Dixon (see related story on page 15). Although the event is not open to the public (just for the kids) those wishing to meet Dixon can do so at a special book signing held at Vintage Vinyl at 6 p.m. on the 22nd.

But by far, the biggest change in the St. Louis Blues Society is the departure of its former executive director, Joel Slotnikoff. Due to a difference in directions, Joel has decided to pursue other creative endeavors. However, his impact on the St. Louis Blues Society, felt by way of his intense dedication to the Society, his countless hours of work on the Blues Festival, his ability to help the Society grow in its ranks and scope and his tireless efforts to champion St. Louis blues music will leave a lasting impression for future generations of blues lovers. The board of directors wish to thank Joel Slotnikoff for all he has done on behalf of the St. Louis Blues Society. His work will not be forgotten. Best of luck, Joel.

Finally, there never has been a better opportunity to join the St. Louis Blues Society. We urge all blues loving St. Louisans to get involved in the preservation and proliferation of blues music here at home. We hope to hear from you soon.

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## Upcoming Events

- Feb 8-9 SOULARD MARDI GRAS
- Feb 9 Rockin' Dopsie & Zydeco Twisters  
Leroy Pierson at St. Louis Ballroom
- Feb 9 Johnny Adams with The Heaters  
at Off Broadway
- Feb 16 Barrelhouse Boogie & Blues  
at The Missouri Historical Society
- Feb 22 Willie Dixon Book Signing at  
Vintage Vinyl
- Mar 1-2 The Bel Airs at Off Broadway
- Mar 2 Harp Attack '91 at Mississippi Nights
- Mar 9 Bugs Henderson & The Shufflekings  
at Off Broadway
- Mar 13 Anson Funderburgh & The Rockets  
at Off Broadway

## SOCIETY COMMITTEES

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### FINANCE

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## PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

ESTABLISH SOCIETY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## PROMOTION & RELATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS, ARTS & GRAPHICS,  
THE BLUESLETTER

### EVENTS

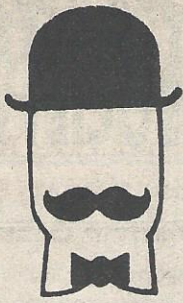
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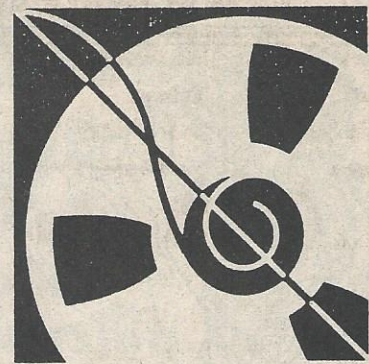
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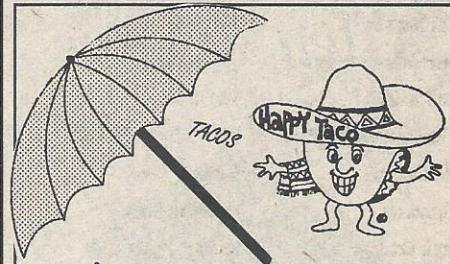
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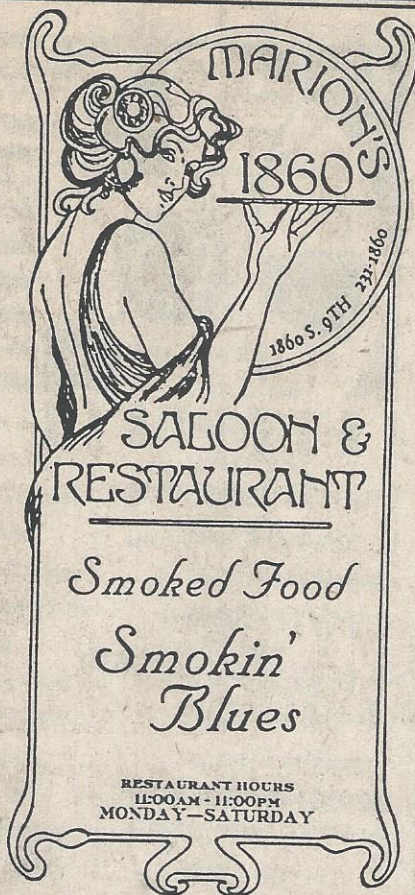
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# BLUES ARCHIVES BENEFIT AT THE MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

by Terri Reilly

The historical preservation of St. Louis blues music for generations to come will become a reality when the St. Louis Blues Society in conjunction with the Missouri Historical Society will sponsor a special evening of blues music. "Barrelhouse, Boogie and Blues" will be held Saturday, Feb. 16 at the History Museum in Forest Park.

"Barrelhouse, Boogie and Blues" will benefit the development and maintenance of a St. Louis blues archives section as part of the Missouri Historical Society's permanent archives collection.

Proceeds from the joint benefit will be used for acquisitions of blues music archives material, including the videotaping of the oral histories of living blues artists who still reside in St. Louis, who spent a significant portion of their music careers in St. Louis or who had a significant impact on St. Louis blues music.

Other archives material will include blues-related items such as musical instruments, photographs, sheet music and other blues-related memorabilia.

"Barrelhouse, Boogie and Blues" will feature an evening of entertainment highlighted by a special blues music performances by a number of well-known St. Louis blues artists.

The museum's Lionberger Gallery will be transformed into a St. Louis barrelhouse circa 1930 as the evening will begin with a cocktail hour accompanied by the wonderful music of blues pianist Clayton Love.

Dinner will follow featuring a variety of blues music. The dinner program will find musical offerings from Silver Cloud, Doder and Edwards who will perform some very special vintage blues on piano, harmonica and bottleneck guitar. The group consists of Silver Cloud Rudy Coleman, Keith Doder of the Blue City Band and Ron Edwards.

Local female singing legend Mae Wheeler's special voice will be accompanied by a rhythm and blues band and will feature her in a retrospective of female blues artist from Bessie Smith to Billie Holliday.

By far, however, the biggest highlight of the evening will certainly be the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award for blues music. It's no surprise the first recipient will be none other than our own Henry Townsend.

The event, which is co-chaired by Ron Henges and Laurna C. Godwin, was developed as a joint committee effort between the Blues Society and the Historical Society. Committee members include Blues Society board of directors N. Barrett Braun, Dave Detering and Ron Edwards.

Numerous Blues Society board members will also be in attendance.

Stay tuned to the next Bluesletter for more on the Blues Archives.



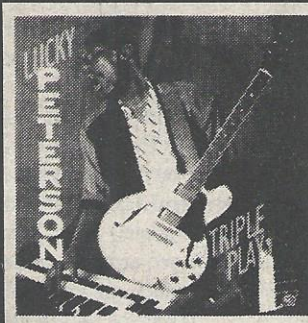
## BLUES IN THE SCHOOLS PROGRAM OFF TO AN EXCELLENT START

by Joel Slotnikoff

The first program of the St. Louis Blues Society's Blues In The Schools Program funded in part by the Regional Arts Commission at the Classical Junior Academy, 5351 Enright was a rousing success by all standards. The Society was introduced to the student body by student Keith Bernard, after which Gary Edwards delivered a short talk on blues.

Featured artists Johnny Johnson and the Magnificent Four then delivered a fifty minute concert complete with encore that had students, faculty, and staff clapping, smiling, and in some cases, dancing in their seats. The artists demonstrated slower blues as well as faster boogies and breakdowns. Vocals by drummer Bell Boy Carter were particularly well received. After the show guitarist Tom Maloney, bassist Gus Thornton, drummer Bell Boy Carter and Johnnie Johnson himself were deluged with questions and accolades by the children as well as the teachers.

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**TEDDY DARBY**  
 by Leroy Pierson

While living in New York City in late 1967, I met and developed a friendship with Nick Perls, an advanced collector of rare country blues recordings, who had recently begun the reissue of important early material through his own Belzona (later to become Yazoo) record label.

Several wonderful evenings were spent at Perl's apartment in the East Village, where I first heard many of the best St. Louis bluesmen recorded in their prime during and immediately preceding the Great Depression of 1929 through 1935. Among these artists was guitarist/vocalist, Teddy Darby, who began recording in 1929 when he cut four titles for Paramount. He would also work for RCA Victor and Vocalion before recording his last commercial session for Decca in 1937. His recordings were released as by: Teddy Darby, Blind Darby, Blind Blues Darby, or under the odd pseudonym, "Blind Squire Turner". On these sessions Darby was joined by several of St. Louis' legendary pianists like Henry Brown, Roosevelt Sykes, Peetie Wheatstraw or the obscure Tom Webb. On returning to St. Louis in early 1968, I found Darby's address and phone number in the phonebook and arranged for a visit to his home at 1947 Tudor in East St. Louis. Actually he resided in the garage next to the home at that address. It had been converted into a one room apartment where we huddled around a space heater and began talking about the old days.

"I was born in Henderson, Kentucky on March 2, 1906 and then I moved up to St. Louis in the Twenties. I had some troubles back then and I had to do a stretch in the St. Louis workhouse. That was in 1927, 'bout the time I lost my eyesight. That's when I started up on the guitar. Didn't nobody teach me, I just picked it up myself in the workhouse. I really worked on the guitar. Not much else a blind man could do then.

The first records I made were for Paramount in 1929, 'My Leona Blues' and 'Lawdy Lawdy'. Leona was my girlfriend who quit me and that's why I made that blues. No, Roosevelt Sykes didn't play no piano on that record. That's Henry Brown. Henry Brown might be dead - I don't know. I ain't seen him in about six years. I recorded some records usin' the name Blind Squire Turner. Those records were all for Victor back in the Thirties with my cousin on piano. Tom Webb was my cousin, a real good piano player. We made lots of records. Tom is dead now. He died about ten years back. He was originally from Cairo, Illinois. He didn't die of no

natural causes, he was killed over a cigarette. A man asks Tom for a cigarette, and Tom holds out the pack. Well, this fellow takes two, puts one in his mouth and one behind his ear. That made Tom mad and he asked the man to step outside. Soon as they get out of the place, the man turns around and stabs Tom. He got the whole pack of cigarettes after that.

Well all of us used to play in those 'smoke shops'. They used to call a tavern a smoke shop back during bootleggin' days. Yeah, a speakeasy. Well now, a whole group of us used to play - me, Henry Townsend, Henry Spaulding, Neckbone, and J.D. Short. I'd say Spaulding was about my age, born about the same time. He died around 1938. "Cairo" was the only record by him was made, but he sang some others. If he heard something he liked, he could pick it right up. I don't really know where he was from. I think it might have been Arkansas. Henry Townsend played pretty much like Spaulding, and he may have picked up a few things from him, but not much. We all played in pretty much the same style. I can't remember Neckbone's real name. Now he may be dead, I haven't seen him since before the war. Jelly Jaw, that's J.D. Short, used to run with us. We went up to Chicago together and that's how he got that name on the record. See, when he'd sing his mouth would shake like jelly.

Well, I played a few house parties with Charley Jordon. He was a crippled fellow - walked with crutches. He was shot in the leg and got all crippled. I don't really remember his songs except "Spoonful" - I used to play that song. Pinetop, that's Aaron Sparks, played piano. He went down to Atlanta with his brother Milton. Milton played guitar. Aaron died in the late Thirties. Sam Fowler still lives over in St. Louis. We played a party together around 1950. To my mind, the best piano player was Peetie Wheatstraw. He was a personal friend of mine. We was together on the day he died. That was back about 1943. He was over at my place and decided to go get some whiskey. He got killed in an automobile accident over by the shortcar (the turn for the bridge between East St. Louis and St. Louis) on his way for a pint. Yeah, Peetie played guitar too, played as good as me.

Well, ain't much call for blues around here anymore. I guess the reason that the blues kinda slacked off around here was just people dying or hearing the call. I heard the call in 1954 - became a deacon. I don't play many blues anymore. It's real hard for me to play at all now 'cause I caught my hand in an electric fan about six and a half years ago. I sure don't get out much now."

(Teddy Darby passed away in the mid-seventies. Portions of the above interview were published in "Living Blues Magazine".)



# HARP ATTACK '91 SLATED FOR MARCH 2

by Tom Ray

Mississippi Nights will host the largest gathering in the Midwest devoted to harmonica entertainment ever when Baton Music and the Harmonica Players of St. Louis host Harp Attack '91, an all day event conceived to promote the growing popularity of the harmonica in American music.

The event is slated for March 2 at Mississippi Nights on Laclede's Landing.

Continuing last year's successful production of the Harp Attack show, this year's Attack will be held in a larger venue and will run twelve-plus hours. Where previous shows have highlighted the considerable talents of the St. Louis blues community, the '91 Harp Attack will be more inclusive of the many different styles of music offered by St. Louis area players.

Jazz, ballads, traditional pop music of the 40s and 50s, country, folk, reggae and Latin, as well as blues are some of the possibilities of the musical offerings found at this year's Attack.

Musical workshops will also be given and booths offering books, instruments and information will be found during the day and evening. The addition this year of the Gateway Harmonica Club will be an added bonus.

Scheduled to perform as the headline act will be Lee Oskar. As a founding member of the successful recording group War, Oskar, who is an instrumentalist, educator and entrepreneur, is also one of the world's leading soloists. He also heads the Lee Oskar Instrument Company, a provider of a superior line of harmonicas.

Blues legend Snooky Pryor will also be featured in the evenings performance, as well as harmonica virtuoso Howard Levy, an innovator of techniques and harp styles.

The greater visibility of harmonica talent will not only give proof of the instrument's continuing evolution, but will absolutely provide one of the year's musical highlights.

Tickets for this incredible blowout musical event will be \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door for an all-day pass for performances, workshops and other events. A special price of \$8 at 9 p.m. will be offered for those wishing to attend just the evening performance of Lee Oskar and other headline acts.

Tickets are available at all TICKETS NOW outlets, Baton Music and both Vintage Vinyl locations in the Delmar Loop. For more information please call 721-3944.

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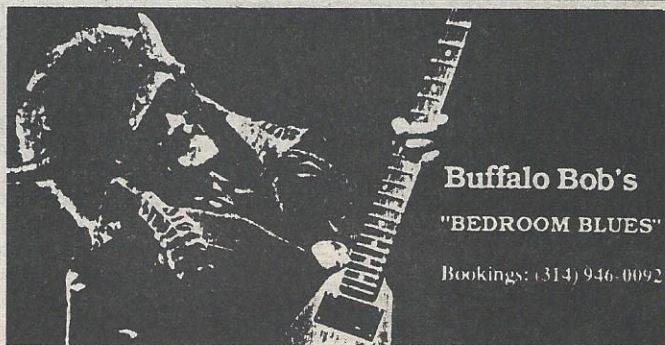
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# NEW BOARD MEMBERS

by Terri Reilly

As you may know by now, the St. Louis Blues Society has gone through a transformation of sorts beginning with the election last September of a new board of directors. Never before have such a talented and diverse group of blues-loving individuals gathered to oversee the activities of the St. Louis Blues Society. Below you'll find brief biographical backgrounds on the newest members of the board of directors.

## TONY CABANELLAS

Tony Cabanellas is probably best known to St. Louis blues music fans as the host of KDHX radio's "Big Bucket of Blues" show where his experience and knowledge of blues is given wide exposure on a weekly basis.

What is perhaps less well known, but nonetheless clear, is that Tony is one of the most knowledgeable and authoritative blues specialists in the city. He began collecting records at the young age of 12 and has worked professional in the record business for nearly 20 years. Many local music fans can cite Tony as a respected and reliable source of information and advice on a wide range of music including, but not limited to blues.

Tony graduate from SIU-Edwardsville with a BS in mass communications. In addition to Tony's radio experience, his skills include video production. Tony's credits include producing the video of the 1986 blues festival which documented St. Louis artists in their natural on-stage environment.

Additionally, Tony chairs the Blues Society sub-committee assigned to document St. Louis blues artists for the development of a permanent archive collection to be housed at the History Museum.

The St. Louis Blues Society welcomes and very much appreciates Tony's deep dedication to the preservation of blues music in St. Louis.

## DAVE DETERING

A blues lover from way back, David Detering has been professionally involved in a variety of non-profit organizations since 1970. In that time, he has assisted those organizations in management, public awareness, volunteer and fund-raising activities.

Dave is a past president of the St. Louis Regional Chapter of the National Society of Fund Raising Executives and is a certified fund raising executive (CFRE). He holds a Master's Degree in English Literature from St. Louis University. Dave resides in University City with his wife, Jackee, and their three children.

Dave's experience in non-profit fund raising makes him a very welcome addition to the board of directors of the St. Louis Blues Society.

*The Board of Directors: Front left to right-Dave Detering, Terri Reilly, Henry Townsend, Back-Ron Edwards, Gene Norman, Tony Cabanellas, Scott Simpson, Bob Schoenfeld, Frank Babcock, Leroy Pierson, Barrett Braun, Jim Michaelree, Mark O'Shaughnessy, John May, Oliver Sain.*

## JIM MICHAELREE

A native St. Louisan, Jim Michaelree has always had a keen interest in music, specifically soul, R&B and blues. As a child he would spend hours in front of the record player memorizing the words and music so he could play along later.

An amateur musician and free-lance artist, Jim not only brings a commitment to the blues, but also an aesthetic perspective as well. Perpetuating and illuminating the blues in a visual concept has become a labor of love for Jim.

Jim's first real involvement with the Blues Society was designing and printing a banner for the Kings of Rhythm Reunion. The banner was brought along on tour with the band providing it with a backdrop which eventually was used as an album cover.

Since then, Jim has been involved in various projects for the Blues Society working in the area of graphic selections and executions. Most recently, Jim was an invaluable source for the development of last September's Blues Festival serving as a judge for the selection of the winning poster entry. He then supervised the graphic development transferring the necessary images to their correct medium for programs, t-shirts, posters and banners.

The St. Louis Blues Society is most fortunate to welcome a man of Jim's diverse talents to the board of directors.

## LEROY JODIE PIERSON

Well known to all lovers of blues music, Leroy Jodie Pierson developed an interest in music at an early age as his father played guitar and fiddle in a western swing group. Leroy began playing guitar himself at the tender age of 13.

In 1963, Leroy began actively collecting blues 78s and developing the interest that would later manifest in the formation of the reissue work that appeared on the Boogie Disease and Nighthawk Record releases. That same year,

Leroy met Henry Townsend, St. Louis' foremost blues artist. Since then the two have developed a close personal and professional rapport stretching more than 25 years.

A veteran producer of blues festivals, Leroy has worked with such greats as Fred McDowell, Son House, Arthur Crudup, Junior Wells, Mance Lipscomb, Robert Pete Williams, J.B. Hutto, Roosevelt Sykes, Sunnyland Slim and Johnny Shines.

Leroy's reputation as a performer of blues music is known to many. He began making a name for himself performing in the blues clubs of St. Louis in the early '70s. Over the years Leroy has been flanked by a litany of greats including Albert King, Bonnie Raitt, Otis Rush, John Hammond, John Lee Hooker, Robert Lockwood, as well as numerous other talented musicians.

As a musicologists and blues researcher, Leroy has gained a world-wide reputation for the authority of his writing and the original material he has contributed to blues history. He formed Nighthawk Records with Bob Schoenfeld and began producing a series of albums which established the label as one of the leader in the area of blues research. In 1976, four albums were released to launch the Nighthawk blues reissue series. Leroy's quality work on the blues reissues helped make the series among the most successful ever.

Leroy's written word is most respected and has appeared in numerous publications both local, national and international. In addition, in 1986 the United States Information Agency tapped Leroy and his band for a month-long tour of the island of Jamaica where they performed more than 60 concerts. In 1987 the U.S.I.A. once again called on Leroy, this time for an overseas tour of Africa and the Middle East.

In 1988, Nighthawk Records released the first album from the Leroy Pierson Band titled "Rusty Nail." This summer, Leroy and his band

*Please turn to page 16*



# PORTRAITS IN BLUE

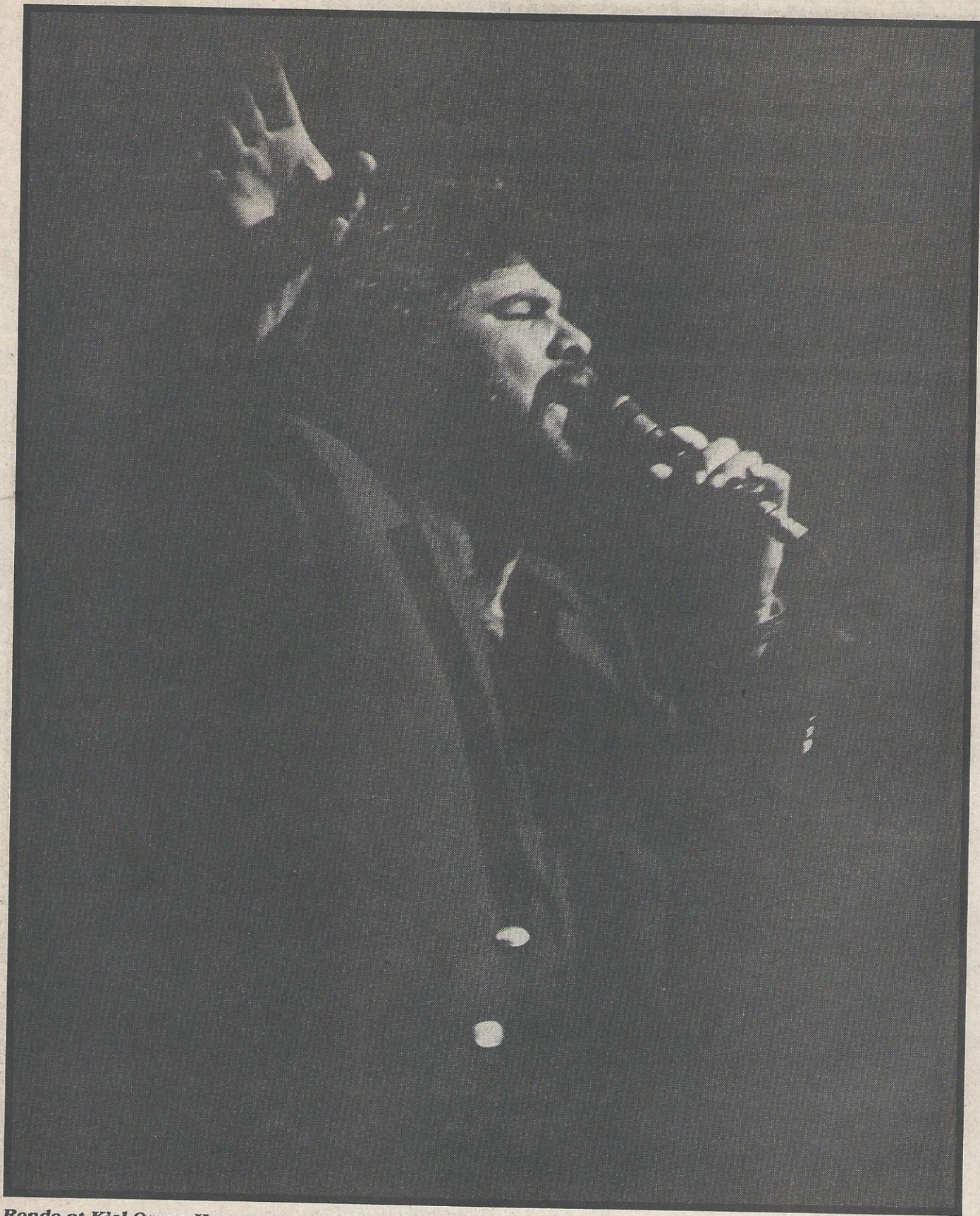
By Mark Gilliland



*Henry Townsend at the Sheldon.*

Copyright 1991 Mark Gilliland



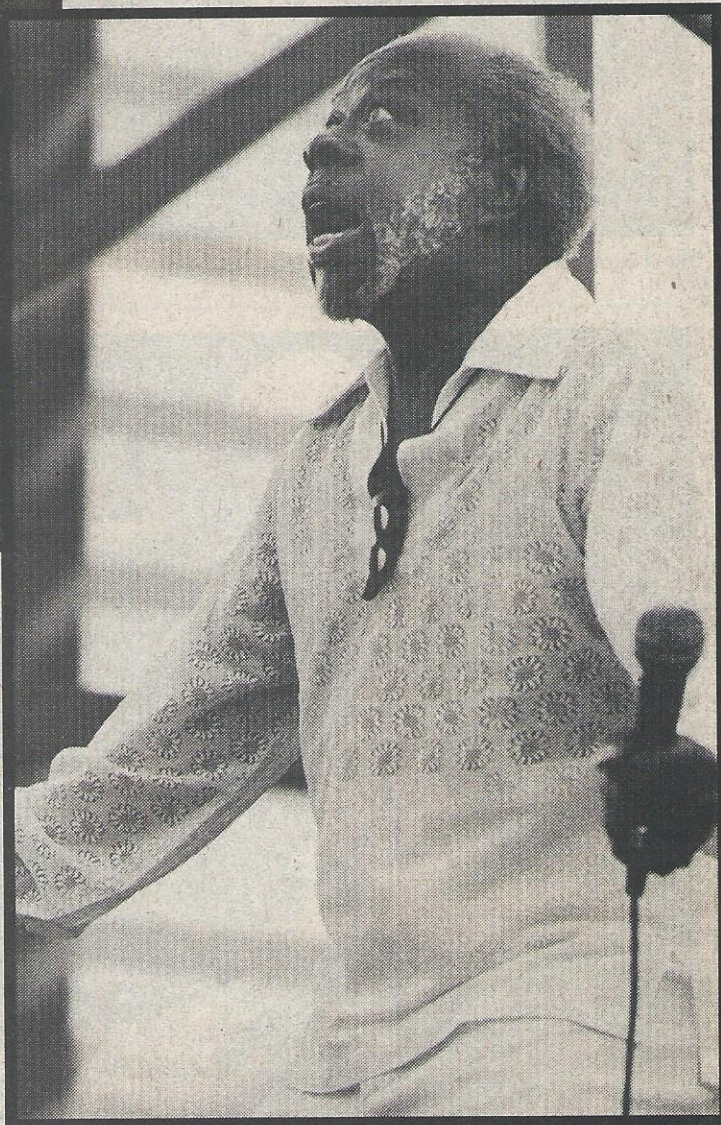


*Rondo at Kiel Opera House.*





*Leroy Pierson at the Sheldon.*

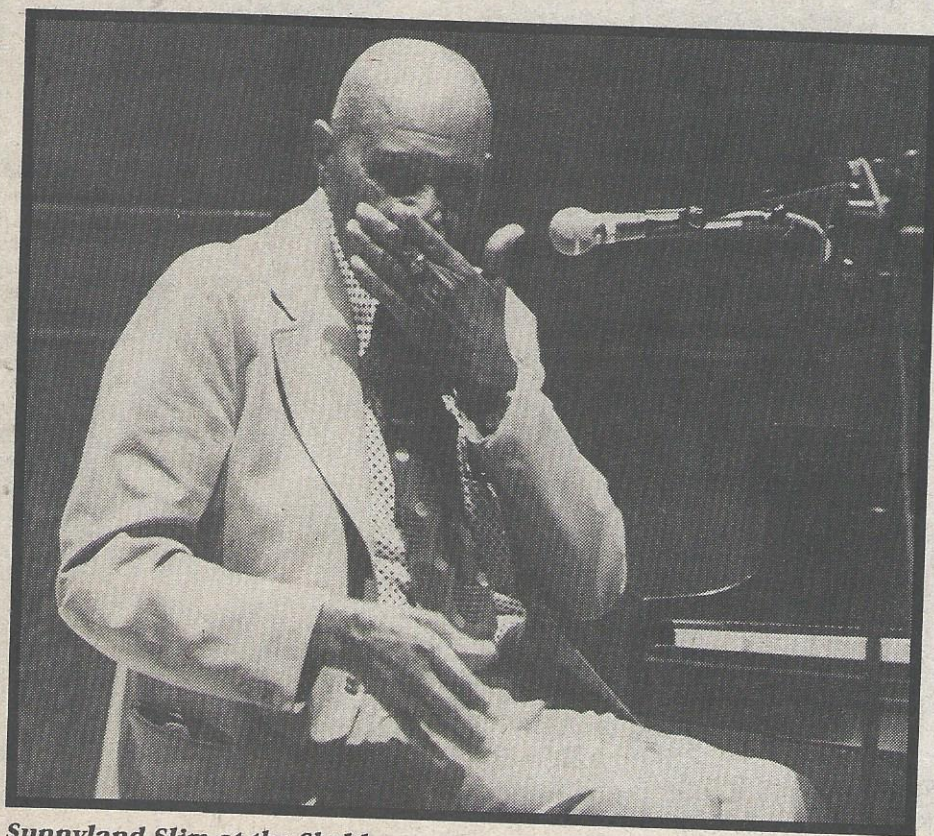


*Rufus Thomas at Kiener Plaza.*





*Bud Spires and Jack Owens at the Sheldon.*



*Sunnyland Slim at the Sheldon.*



# STUDYING THE BLUES

by Bob Schoenfeld

Good morning little schoolgirl, today our subject is the blues...

Students at St. Louis' Jefferson Elementary School are in for a very rare treat when The St. Louis Blues Society, in cooperation with Hohner Harmonicas and The Blues Heaven Foundation, present a special "Blues in the Schools" program on February 22. The program brings together the legendary composer Willie Dixon, founder of The Blues Heaven Foundation, and two of the best known and most popular harmonica players in St. Louis - Doc Terry and Keith Doder.

Willie Dixon is best known as the most prolific and successful composer the blues has yet produced. He is the author of some of the most popular and widely recognized blues compositions ever recorded. His catalog of songs includes many of what are today regarded as classics of the genre, including such standouts as "Seventh Son", "Hootchie Coochie Man", "Little Red Rooster", "Wang Dang Doodle", and many more. His influence on blues over the last forty-plus years is beyond question, leaving an indelible mark on the careers of such diverse artists as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter and even Led Zeppelin. From his early beginnings, including his very successful years with the legendary Chess record label in Chicago, up to the present day, no other composer has had the lasting impact on America's one truly original art form - the blues.

The Blues Heaven Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation formed in Illinois by Mr. Dixon which has set out to address and correct some of the misunderstandings and injustices we have come to associate with blues and blues artists. Among the foundation's many goals and worthy endeavors are: a scholarship program for deserving young people set up in the name of Muddy Waters, the donation of instruments to high schools and secondary schools around the country, various exhibits and special events highlighting blues across the country, and the protection of copyrights and royalties for the composers of blues music. Willie Dixon has become much more than an artist and composer of note - he is changing the way we perceive our cultural history.

(Mr. Dixon states) "I've dedicated most of my life to the blues. The blues have been neglected. A lot of black culture has not been taught in America. The blues are the roots of American music - not just some of it, but all of it. Whether I wrote it or somebody else wrote it, if it was called the blues, that meant it was marked from the beginning as black folks' music. I want these kids to know that the rearrangement of the blues is what created all the other musics in America."

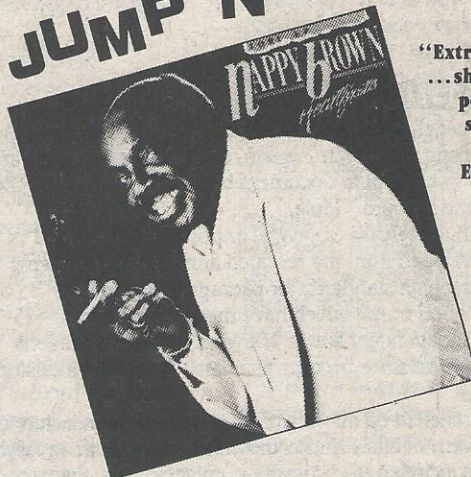
Working closely with Hohner, makers of a wide assortment of harmonicas used by many blues artists, Dixon is bringing his message to schools from California to Virginia. Hohner has donated hundreds of harmonicas to be given away to students during these programs which Dixon hopes will leave a lasting impression on the minds and hearts of young people. The performance portion of the program at (School Name) will feature our own



Willie Dixon

Doc Terry and Keith Doder, perhaps the best known harmonica players on the local scene. With Doc and Keith demonstrating the possibilities of the harmonica and with Willie Dixon speaking, the students should find the program entertaining as well as enlightening. Who knows, the next Sonny Boy Williamson could be right in that classroom! Too often we tend to look on blues as the music of the past and as a creative source of inspiration, but thanks to Dixon, Hohner and The Blues In The Schools program, the future looks much brighter.

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## NEW BOARD MEMBERS *Continued from page 10*

will be performing at a variety of festivals in the Midwest and East Coast.

The St. Louis Blues Society is extremely pleased and honored to have as a member of the board of directors a blues lover of the depth and breadth of Leroy Jodie Pierson.

### TERRI F. REILLY

Terri F. Reilly is a St. Louis born and bred blues lover.

Terri's background is diverse, having held a variety of public relations and marketing consulting positions for a number of St. Louis companies and institutions, including the University of Missouri - St. Louis, The City of St. Louis and The Muny.

Currently, she is the director of development for Nerinx Hall, a private Catholic girls school located in Webster Groves. She is also on the faculty of the Media Communications Department of Webster University where she teaches public relations, development and journalism.

She is currently pursuing a master's degree in education, with an emphasis in administration, from the University of Missouri - St. Louis. She holds a BS in Political Science from the same university.

A published journalist with more than nine years of professional experience, Terri's name is familiar to those readers of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch where her work as a music critic and entertainment feature writer appears. Her area of emphasis is roots-based music, specifically blues and rhythm and blues music. Her work has appeared in many St. Louis publications, including the Riverfront Times and St. Louis magazine, as well as numerous national publications.

Terri brings with her an intense love of blues music and is dedicated to the proliferation of the form. She has been associated with the St. Louis Blues Society since its inception and has written numerous articles about the group and its activities. Terri was very active as a public relations volunteer consultant for the Blues Society's Blues Festival last fall.

Above all, she is very happy and proud to be the first female member of the board of directors of the St. Louis Blues Society. Move on over boys.

### ROBERT SCHOENFELD

Bob Schoenfeld is most widely known to the local music community as the owner and co-founder, along with Leroy Pierson, of Nighthawk Records in 1976, the first local label to attempt to document blues in St. Louis with the release of Henry Townsend's album, "Mule."

Nighthawk began with the release of several important regional and historical anthologies developed from the research and collection of Leroy Pierson. These releases set high standards for packaging, annotation, programming and sheer good music which have made Nighthawk a respected leader among independent labels. Many important innovations developed by Nighthawk have since become standards within the industry as other labels took notice.

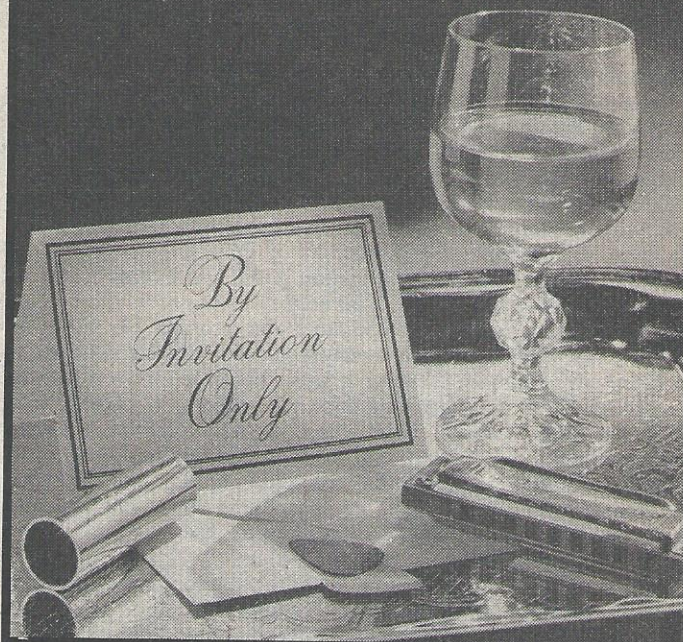
In 1980 Nighthawk branched off into the production and manufacture of the uniquely Caribbean form of blues music known as reggae with equally impressive results. Artists included the Grammy-nominated Itals, the Gladiators, Justin Hinds and the Dominoes and Winston Jarrett.

In 1988, Nighthawk released the first album by the Leroy Pierson Band, "Rusty Nail," thus fulfilling a plan first derived 10 years earlier by the two original partners.

Bob and Nighthawk hope to continue to record local artists and sees his challenge as helping to expose St. Louis artist to an even wider audience via national distribution and international sales. Looking ahead to '91, Bob is expecting the release of "Mule" and "Rusty Nail" on CD.

With his unique experience in artist development, production - both on stage and in the studio - and marketing, Bob brings a well-rounded background to the board of directors of the St. Louis Blues Society.

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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1991 BLUESLETTER



# HENRY TOWNSEND COPYRIGHT PROJECT COMPLETED

by Mark O'Shaughnessy

The Henry Townsend project, as we called it, started a little over two years ago, in late 1988. Henry Townsend was considering the need to copyright his life's work of musical compositions. He had a lot of material. Over 178 songs that he had either written lyrics and music for, or just the lyrics, or just the music. He had also been a sideman on over 150 recording sessions starting in 1929, and had either recorded or had numbers of past recordings released for prestigious Blues Labels each decade of the century since then. He had over 25 albums to his credit, either as the feature artist or as part of blues anthology packages. He thought it was high time to finally lock down for his family, children and grandchildren some kind of control of this musical legacy. It took Henry all of his life to lay down that much material. He wasn't even old enough to vote when he got his first recording gig. That was in the late twenties and light years away of the racial equality that exists today. Back then, it wasn't a matter of dealing with agents, or contracts, or anything legal like copyrights, much less being informed about following up on control of this intellectual property. Times were hard and the idea was much too abstract from the everyday struggle for existence that Henry and other Blues musicians of his day had to face, and after all, it paid more money to play a couple of tunes at a recording studio than you could get playing a couple of nights in a barrelhouse or at a house party. If the recording sold well, you got known by more people and consequently got more work. The more people that wanted you, the higher your price got. Never much discussion about paperwork or royalties or residual benefits and you get the idea that the motto most followed by the record producers of the day was "What They Don't Know Won't Hurt Them".

Through Living Blues Magazine I found out about an organization called "Blues Heaven Foundation" in Western Springs, Illinois. Through this organization I got to talk to Scott Cameron who was an attorney and working in the field of helping artists such as Henry to obtain copyrights on their works as well as to litigate for, and act as a watchdog agency to, well respected Blues artists and their material, all who for one reason or another never bothered to retain, or were not aware of their rights pertaining to, copyright ownership. Scott, who had recently moved to the west coast (address) also turned me on to a gentleman named Howell Begle who was spearheading an

organization in Washington DC called the Rhythm & Blues Foundation. Howell had been instrumental as well as successful in litigating for his clients and acquiring major funding from some of the biggest record labels in the US. I read of his successful endeavors in Time magazine and was impressed by his knowledge and tenacity. Through conversations with these gentlemen and many of the members of the St. Louis Blues Society, we decided to seek out the "Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts", a non-profit organization which provides professional services to artists and art groups who may not otherwise afford the high costs of lawyers and accountants. We contacted Volunteer Lawyers for legal assistance about information pertaining to the filing of Henry's copyrights. It took some time for them to locate a volunteer attorney with expertise in copyrights; but finally, an appointment was made for Henry to meet with Bryan Wheelock, then with Senniger, Powers, Leavitt & Roedel (currently with Armstrong Teasdale). Bryan instructed Henry on the information necessary to file copyrights on his music, as well as informed us of the current restrictions of litigating against any record company which Henry believed had broken trust with him in reference to the new and old copyright laws.

In a period of over two years Bob Schoenfeld, Tom Ray, Bill Greensmith, Leroy Pierson, Tony Cabanellas, Kathy Wentzel, John May, Blues Heaven Foundation, Scott Cameron, Howell Begle, Leo Bruin, Brian Wheelock and myself, worked together to research, document, and copyright Henry Townsend's life music works. Paperwork on it was hard to come by. Many documents were lost or destroyed over the years. Many of the deals Henry had made were with a handshake and ready cash. Many recordings were out of issue and considered rare collectors items. Many of the record companies were long since out of business or their catalogs sold in mergers and acquisitions with bigger companies. Some record companies were overseas and outside of the legal jurisdiction of the U.S. laws. Several recordings had since reverted to the sphere of public domain where anyone with a clean tape or record in good shape could reissue as they pleased. There were over 234 song titles issued with over 25 record companies. There were even modern covers being done on his material. (Check out "Tears Come Rolling Down" on John Mayall's 1989 album on Island Records). Many songs were

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released several times with different record companies. The task of compiling the data pertaining to all of these recordings was an arduous one, but everyone involved gave generously of their time and expertise. The result of the work was no less than a book full of the history of Henry Townsend and his music, including a taped collection of all recordings which were available (some of his recordings were so rare that no copies were found).

With this data at hand, the attorney, Bryan Wheelock, had what he needed to file the copyrights on those recordings of Henry's which were yet uncopyrighted. So far, six of Henry's most popular songs have been filed with the copyright office in Washington, D.C., and Bryan is now in the process of filing Henry's entire collection of 178 musical works. On February 16, Henry Townsend and The St. Louis Blues Society will contribute a copy of this collection of work to The Missouri Historical Society's St. Louis musical archives section. This date marks the first of both societies cooperative effort on a joint fund raising benefit for the purpose of establishing a more thorough Blues archives section for the City of St. Louis. With all the dedicated experts, educators, historians and workers involved within the two organizations, and with all of the rich history of musicians which St. Louis has produced over the years needing to be recognized, it seems like The Henry Townsend project and similar projects such as this are well worth the effort.



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Saturday 6-11 AM, Gracie

Monday-Friday 6-10 AM, Dr. Jockenstein

Monday-Friday 1-4 PM Heart & Soul Satellite

Saturday 4-9 PM Michael Key

Friday 9-1 Lou Thimes Live From Shaw Hall

Saturday 9-1 Dr. Jockenstein Live From Club 54

## KCLC 89.1 FM

Sunday 8-Midnight, Blues From The Basement  
Cindy Foemel

## KDHX 88.1 FM

Sunday 6-7 PM, Glass Bottom Boat, Uncle Roy

Sunday 7-8 PM, Nothin' But The Blues,  
Ron Edwards

Sunday 8-10 PM, The Night Train, Pappa Ray

Sunday 10-12, For Night People, Al Becker

Monday 3:30-6:30 PM Gentleman Jim Gates

Tuesday 4-6:30 PM Bluesday Afternoon,  
Dennis Clancey and John McHenry

Thursday 2-4 PM, A Big Bucket of Blues,  
Tony C. and Bill Greensmith

Thursday 4-6:30 PM, Gabriel

Thursday 9-11 PM, Crescent City Classics,  
Miss Q.

Friday 4:30-6:30 PM, Blues In The Night,  
Art Dwyer

Friday 7:30-9, The Roots Canal, Orlando

## KSLH 91.5 FM

Friday 3-4:30 PM Brian Biven Rhythm Show

Saturday 7-9 PM Brian Biven Rhythm Show

## KWUR 90.3 FM,

Sunday 2-4 PM, Becca Shipp

Sunday 4-6 PM, Elizabeth Lawrence

Tuesdays 12-2PM, Ian Harris / Andrew Wool

Wednesday 2-4 AM Blues At Two, Liz Voosen  
and Allen Gillette

Thursdays 10AM-12PM, John Kasab

Fridays 2-4PM, Kevin Singer / Mathew Karch

## WSIE 88.7 FM

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Friday Midnight, BluesStage Ruth Brown

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**CONTEMPORARY FEMALE ARTIST:** Koko Taylor  
**CONTEMPORARY MALE ARTIST:** John Lee Hooker  
**BAND:** Buddy Guy and his Chicago Blues Band  
**TRADITIONAL FEMALE ARTIST:** Queen Ida  
**TRADITIONAL MALE ARTIST:** Sunnyland Slim  
**VOCALIST:** John Lee Hooker  
**INSTRUMENTALIST — GUITAR:** Buddy Guy  
**INSTRUMENTALIST — MISCELLANEOUS:** Charlie Musselwhite, harp  
**SONG OF THE YEAR:** "The Middle Aged Blues Boogie," Saffire.  
Written by Gaye Agdebalola. (Alligator)  
**SINGLE OF THE YEAR:** "Big Leg Woman/Cadillac Baby,"  
Sonny Rodgers and the Cat Scratchers (Blue Moon)  
**CONTEMPORARY ALBUM (U. S.):** John Lee Hooker,  
*The Healer* (Chameleon)  
**CONTEMPORARY ALBUM (FOREIGN):** Various artists: Pinetop Perkins  
and John Brim, *Chicago Blues Sessions, Vol. 12* (Wolf, Austria)  
**TRADITIONAL ALBUM:** John Cephas & Phil Wiggins,  
*Guitar Man* (Flying Fish)  
**VINTAGE/REISSUE ALBUM (U. S.):** Muddy Waters,  
*The Chess Box* (MCA/Chess)  
**VINTAGE/REISSUE ALBUM (FOREIGN):** Howlin' Wolf,  
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