



Sad News NO DANCE I Repeat NO DANCE Nov. 1, 2020



CASEY DICKENS

Inducted Oct. 5, 1986



CAROLYN SILLS

Inducted Oct. 6, 2019

Western Swing Society Hall of Fame Profile ~ Page 3

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OPEN POSITION on the BOARD

Please help us fill this position!

RIP Billy page 4 & 7

RIP Maggie page 4

Membership Dues to Re-sume! The WSS board had a meeting and felt that we need to start our membership drive up. A lot of folks have already paid their dues and will be receiving their cards soon, Thank You!

The Western Swing Society

PO Box 2474

Carmichael, CA 95609

westernswingsociety.net

Facebook: SacramentoWesternSwingSociety

Founded in 1981 by Loyd and Perry Jones to enable performance, preservation and perpetuation of the unique American art form known as Western Swing Music.

Officers:

President, Rex Barnes (916) 704-1566

Vice Pres, Jimmy Boehnke (530) 886-8375

Treasurer, Cheryl Dearborn

Secretary, (open)

Other Directors:

Tony Arana (775) 971-3070

Ronnie Elkan (916) 765-4345

Linda McCarley (916) 870-7463

Dave Rietz (916) 806-0520

Jeff Tilton (916) 798-9377

Staff and Committee Chairpersons:

Admissions Coordinator, Linda McCarley

Bar Manager, Jimmy Boehnke

Bartender, Cyndi Lee

Decorating Chair, Rex Barnes

Equipment and Staging, Gary Blodgett

Historian, (open)

Jam Room, Tony Arana

Master of Ceremonies, Jimmy Boehnke

Membership Director, (open)

Music Director, Ronnie Elkan

Newsletter Editor, Ronnie Elkan

Photographer, Donald deMars

Public Relations Administrator, Jeff Tilton

Raffle, Bob and Virginia Kuykendall

Slide Show, (open)

Sound Engineer, Gary Blodgett

Website, Dave Rietz

EDITOR'S LETTER

Hey Guys, guess what? No dance again. I'm running out of anything to say regarding our dance, but I'm not giving up. I think some of us will be ready to go with caution as soon as they let us. By now we all are used to masks and keeping reasonable distances between the tables. I'm sure that there will be some folks that will not ever be comfortable coming back. We will deal with that as soon as we get the green light on having a dance.



Unfortunately we are losing people. This month we say goodbye to Maggie Hull and Billy Champion. We are grieving with Charlie Hull and with the entire Champion family. Here is a great picture of Billy with the Hot Club of Cowtown taken last year at our Hall of Fame. What a great show to kick off our Hall of fame. I look forward to doing it again in 2021.



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Views and opinions expressed by contributing authors are not necessarily those of the editorial staff or the Society.

Submitted articles, publicity notices and letters not relating directly to the Society or its members may be published at the discretion of the Editor, as space permits. The staff reserves the right to edit any and all items submitted for publication.

Deadline for Submittals:

All items, photographs, articles, and ad's are due to the Editor no later than the 10th of the month.

Thanks to all that are keeping the organization going by sending in your dues. It's not that we need the money now, but when we are allowed to have our dances I'm sure we will be operating in the red until we get it going again. I'm up for the challenge as well as all the rest of you are. I can tell by the wonderful support WSS is getting from all our members.

Please send your dues in to:

The Western Swing Society

PO Box 2474

Carmichael, CA 95609

CASEY DICKENS

Inducted October 5, 1986
Born July 18, 1929—Died June 23, 2019



He was a Bob Wills Fan, beginning in Junior High School. He first met Bob in 1949 through a disc jockey in Port Arthur, Texas. After working for, traveling with, and knowing him for some 37 years, he was still a big Bob Wills fan.

One night after about ten ears of following Bob at dances and visiting in his home, Bob suggested Casey buy a rhythm instrument, either bass or drums, and start playing, because, as he put it “you are eat up with rhythm.” That was all the encouragement that Casey needed. He bought a set of used drums from Herb Remington in Houston, went back to Beaumont and started practicing, listening to Bob’s records. While practicing along with Bob’s records, working with some local bands including, Al Terry “Good Deal Lucille”, Cliff Bruner “Jesse Polka, and Moon Mulligan “I’ll Sail my Ship Alone”, he concentrated on a heavy beat, knowing that was what Bob liked. On two different occasions at Bob’s dances, he asked Casey to sit in and they both were surprised at Casey’s progress.

Almost two years to the date (1960) after buying his drums, Bob called Casey from Tulsa and asked him to meet the band in Fort Worth at the old Crystal Springs Ballroom managed by former vocalist Joe Andrews. The next three and one-half years enabled Casey to meet and renew old times with former Playboys during the big band days, including the great Tommy Duncan and his brother Glenn, Joe Holley, Alex Breshear, Noel Boggs, Johnny Cuvillo, Eldon Shamblin, and many more, too numerous to mention. It was Casey’s privilege to also meet and know Bob’s family: Betty and the children, Johnny Lee, Luke, Billy Jack, and Bob’s sisters.

Band members while Casey was on the band included Tommy Duncan, Gene Crownover, George Clayburn, Tag Lambert, and Frankie McWhorter. Casey left the band in September 1963 and resumed his teaching Career. He retired after twenty-seven years.

Continued on page 5

CAROLYN SILLS

Inducted October 6, 2019
Born August 18, 1978



I was born, Carolyn Sills, on August 15th, 1978 in Chicago, Illinois, to Robert and Janie Sills. I grew up singing along to the radio with my Pops, learning all the 'oldies' Dick Biondi played on 104.3, from The Platters and The Shangri-Las to Leslie Gore, The Association, Marty Robbins, The Mama's and the Papas and

more. I started singing in choirs at a young age and took to singing harmonies quickly, thanks to all those sing-a-long car rides running errands to the hardware and grocery stores. In middle school I started taking piano lessons, and joined the school band with the alto saxophone. It wasn't until I went off to college that I realized I could sing music outside of school clubs, and I joined two local bands as the lead singer. These were my first paid gigs, although I had to wait outside during our breaks because I wasn't old enough to drink. I was enjoying singing lead, although it took some years to gain true confidence on stage. My least favorite part was waiting around while the guys took long instrumental breaks during practices and shows. This led me to buying a bass guitar, and teaching myself how to sing and play simultaneously.

I found a great guitar player in college, Gerard Egan, so I married him. Flash forward some years, and I am so lucky to say we now live in Santa Cruz, CA, and formed The Carolyn Sills Combo, playing



original country and western swing. We love spaghetti western films and our old vinyl record collections of Bob Wills, Patsy Cline, Merle Travis and Les Paul & Mary Ford. We try to keep our music real and swinging, with that familiar sound you might here on an old juke box, but based on fresh and original ideas and melodies. We’re tipping our hats to the music that made us want to play, but crafting new originals to help keep the genres mov

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RIP Billy Champion (5/6/1928-10/25/2020)



I'm very sad to announce that my beloved Dad, Billy Champion, has passed away. He died peacefully in his sleep surrounded by his family's love. He is dearly loved and missed.

In order to maintain the health and safety of

everyone, we will be hosting a virtual life celebration event in the near future. If you would like to contribute your memories, stories, pictures or anything else to this, please consider joining the Facebook group here:

[Life Celebration of Billy Champion](#)

I will post an update with more details on how to view/attend this as we finalize our plans.

Those of us that have been by his bedside want to thank his numerous friends and family that have called to check-in, offer support, share stories and provide love and prayers. Your care means the world and reflects the good-natured, warm-hearted souls he sought to spend time with throughout his entire life. Rest in peace, Billy Champion

Sarah Champion Pedersen & [Sherry Champion](#)



Billy and his good friend Tink Carriker

RIP Sweet Maggie Hull



This is the email I received from Charlie Hull at 5:00 am this morning October 28 to let me know Maggie had passed away:

Maggie passed away peacefully last night. She had respiratory complications.. A light has gone out. She was my loving companion for over forty years and we shared many wonderful adventures together, mostly with amazing friends in the jazz community. No memorial service is planned, per her wishes. Her ashes will be interred in her family's plot in the Fair Oaks Cemetery.

Charlie

Maggie will be missed by so many, especially those of us who got a chance to see her gardening skills. God bless you Maggie and Charlie.

APPLYING FOR MEMBERSHIP AND NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

Submit the following information in a note with your check to:
The Western Swing Society, P.O. Box 2474, Carmichael, CA 95609:

Name(s), mailing address, email address, and telephone number.

Fees (make check payable to Western Swing Society)

Individual Membership, \$15 per year.

Couples Membership, \$20 per year. (one address only).

Dues renew every July.

If you join during any other month, your membership fee will be prorated to align with the July renewal.

You will receive a color version of our newsletter via email. Paid membership also includes reduced admission fee at Society music functions, and the right to vote in Society elections and on proposed By-Law changes.



Sunday, November 1, 2020

NOVEMBER DANCE CANCELED

FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT AND DANCING PLEASURE



Casey Dickens continued from page 3

Following his retirement, he lived on a small ranch north of Fort Worth where he enjoyed his Bob Wills collection and reminisced about his Texas Playboy days.

There was still a special comradeship among the Texas Playboys and they all enjoyed visiting and



Casey with Bob Wills

reliving their experiences

while on the band. Every Playboy knew the special feeling that they each had for Bob.

He felt it was a privilege for him, and a dream come true, to have been a TEXAS PLAYBOY.

Carolyn Sills continued from page 3

ing forward.

We are very grateful for our bandmates and their immense talent. We feature Charlie Joe Wallace on steel guitar, Jim Norris on drums and Sunshine



Jackson on harmony vocals and percussion. We're proud of our live show full of three part vocal harmonies, dueling guitar and steel instrumentals and tight arrangements of our own distinct brand of Western Swing. Over the last two years we toured as far east as Tennessee, also playing in Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada and much of California. We so appreciate audiences throughout the country, especially some of the birthplaces of country and western swing, welcoming our music and our California selves.

We have had the pleasure of opening for and/or sharing the stage with western music legends, Asleep At The Wheel (at the Fox Theater), James Hand and Don Edwards. We are getting ready to release a third album in 2019, which is based on Marty Robbins' famous song, El Paso.

The Carolyn Sills Combo has been nominated for five Ameripolitan Awards in the last three years (2016-2018), for both Western Swing Group and Western Swing Female. In 2016, we received a

Continued next column

Carolyn Sills continued

nomination from the Academy of Western Artists for western swing group, female, album and song (Even Villains Once Were Babies). Our Combo took home the 2018 Ameripolitan Award for Best Western Swing Group at the awards show in Memphis, TN. It was a surreal moment, and I was



so proud of my bandmates and

the music we've created together. I gave a speech, we got a big round of applause and then we went backstage where we were showered with congratulations. A bunch of our idols were back there: Rosie Flores, Reverend Horton Heat, Big Sandy, Dale Watson. The Ameripolitans, like the Western Swing Society, is a very supportive organization, and it was wonderful to be recognized for our hard work by so many other talented players.

It is an honor to be nominated for the Western Swing Society's Hall of Fame, to be honest, I couldn't believe it when I heard the news. We first learned of the Western Swing Society through our dear pal Shorty Joe. We met him serendipitously through Santa Cruz Guitar Company, and have been fortunate enough to spend some time with him at his home and have him sing a few songs with our band over the last couple of years. We came to visit him one weekend in Sacramento and stopped by the Western Swing Society's Sunday afternoon show. We met many wonderful people and heard fantastic music on both the main stage and in the jam sessions happening in smaller rooms. It made us so appreciative of an organization that is keeping this music alive and swinging for all of us who love it. Gerard and I are trying to do our part by continuing to play the older, beloved western swing classics of our idols, and most importantly, write new songs using



those styles and instrumentations that hopefully attract a whole new generation of listeners, and keep this American art form thriving for years to come. I greatly appreciate the nomination, and thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself.

BRAND NEW AT THE WESTERN SWING SOCIETY by Edd Burhans



Jacket Front with Fitted Ball Cap



Jacket Back



Western Swing Society
Sacramento, California
CLOTHING PRICES

T- Shirts

Small - Extra Large \$15.00
2 XL \$17.00

Polo Shirts (Men's & Women's)

Small - Extra Large \$20.00
2 XL \$22.00

Onesies \$12.00

Caps \$20.00

Jackets

Small - Extra Large \$78.00
2 XL \$82.00
3 XL \$85.00
4 XL \$90.00

All Prices Include Sales Tax



Merchandise is available at our monthly dances and at our annual Hall of Fame.

Jackets and Polo shirts can be customized with name for additional cost.

Brand New: Womens and Girls V-top Tee. The red in the logo is glitter.

It will sell for \$18 Small thru Extra Large. \$20 for a XXL



RIP Billy Champion (5/6/1928-10/25/2020)

Billy Ray Champion was born on May 6, 1928 in Holdenville, Oklahoma, the second of the eight children born Chester and Ada Champion. In 1935 at seven years old, Billy started playing rhythm guitar and doing vocals with his two brothers James and Joe. This con-

tinued until 1943 as documented in the profile of James Champion. When James went overseas in 1943 Billy and Joe worked together to further develop their musical skills and learned to play additional instruments. In 1945, Billy and Joe were asked to join a newly organized ten member western swing band called The Gold Coast Playboys. Billy played rhythm guitar and did vocals, and Joe was on piano. Cleon Winters, a fiddler, was the group's organizer. It was the first full western swing band to be formed in northern California. At the time, Bob Wills and Spade Cooley were playing in the Los Angeles area.



Joe 5, Billy, 7, James 10

The Gold Coast Playboys were together from 1945 to 1947. During these two years, they played for dances up and down the San Joaquin Valley and did a live radio broadcast six nights a week over radio station KTRB, Modesto California. Most of the members in the band were in their teens. Along with Billy and Joe Champion were Ceon Winters, Walt Levings, and Mack McCann on fiddles, Johnny McDonald on drums, Hoot McCann was on lead guitar and later played with Alex Brashear at Wills Point. Also, Truitt Cunningham on bass and vocals, as you know, later played and sang with Bob Wills. Bobby Lee on trumpet later played with Leon McAuliffe in Tulsa. Travis Smith played steel and was a Western Swing Society inductee in Sacramento in 1995.

After the Gold Coast Playboys disbanded in late 1947, Billy started playing stand up bass and doing vocals with Cliff Maddox Band playing live radio and dances throughout the Valley and Bay areas. Cliff Maddox was the oldest of the Maddox Broth-

Billy Champion continued

ers family and had his own band. As with lots of musicians, Billy also had a day job and worked for the State of California. He was transferred up north to Napa, California in 1948. For the next couple of years, while working at the Yountville Veterans Home, he formed a trio and entertained the veterans there at the home.

From 1952 to 1954 while serving in the U.S. Marine Corps in San Diego and Camp Pendleton, California, Billy played guitar and sang with a combo at the NCO club. After being discharged from the Marines in 1954, he moved back up north to Vallejo, California where he worked at Mare Island Naval Shipyard, which employed about 10,000 workers. During the next seven years Billy played and sang with a 15 piece swing band and a 5 piece combo at the shipyard. All the musicians worked full time at their trades and were given some extra free time to entertain their fellow workers. They usually played during the lunch hour in the different shop areas.



From 1961 until 1967 while working at the VA hospital in Livermore, California, Billy played casuals in clubs around the Livermore and Pleasanton areas.

During the next 14 years from 1968 to 1982 at Washington D.C., Newark, New Jersey, and Nashville, Tennessee the demands of his executive position with the Veterans Administration allowed Billy only time enough to jam with local musicians for relaxation.



Always ready to dance

He retired in June of 1983 after 33 years of government service and moved to the railroad town of Colfax, California. He joined a group called Lyrical Locos, and entertained at functions around Colfax, Auburn and Grass Valley. He played guitar, electric bass and did vocals. After three years, Billy

and his family moved to Galt, California. He joined with his three daughters (The Champion Sisters) in 1986 and played guitar and banjo accompaniment while they entertained at church services, local lodg-

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Billy Champion continued from page 7
 es and clubs and theatrical and musical productions.

Billy and family moved has played with local groups including Mister Shorty's Rogue Valley Express, Ray James' Rogue River Connection and the Champ/Arnold Western Swing Trio.

As a performing member of the Western Swing Society over the years, Billy has played tenor banjo with most of the West Coast western swing bands from Seattle down to San Diego.



Billy with Dry Creek Band

During 1998 he made two trips to Tulsa, Oklahoma and played at Cain's Ballroom. In March he played with Bob Cobb's Swingin' Ambassadors who were the opening act before the Former Texas Playboys appeared. Then in November, he played at Cain's Ballroom with Bobby Wynne's Kings of Western Swing and Bob Cobb's Swingin' Ambassadors for a two day event. Billy says that for a Western Swinger like himself to play on stage at Cain's Ballroom, Home of Bob Wills, is equivalent to a country musician getting to play on the Grand Ole Opry stage.

This is Billy's original bio turned in to the Western Swing Society in 1999. I would be remiss not to add Billy's Champs of Western Swing that included his brothers James and Joe. He also played with the Dry Creek Band, the house band at the Western Swing Society. Also, Billy traveled back to Turkey Texas for Bob Wills Days and always was invited to play with The Texas Playboys and ride on the float in the parade. He was always honored for his career by all the great bands of today and yesterday.
 Ronnie Elkan.



Left: James, Billy & Joe in red with the Champs of Western Swing. Right: Billy knew everyone, even Ray Benson.

Message From Our Treasurer



NEWS FLASH

It is great to be able to share good news in all of the chaos.

We are blessed to have approximately 50 memberships come through in the last 2 months to support the Western Swing Society.

We have had a couple donations to keep our energy and spirits up while we wait to "Gather" again. Looking forward to a great get together when all regulations can be met. Thanks for supporting WSS .

Cheryl Dearborn, Treasurer



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

If you have an interest in volunteering, please contact President, Rex Barnes (916-704-1566)

Needs/Skills:

- Word processing
- Photo editing
- Set up and tear down assistance

WE HAVE A BOARD POSITION OPEN!
 We will be looking for a new secretary if you have the time and the experience.



OTHER WESTERN SWING MUSIC ORGANIZATIONS/MUSIC HAPPENINGS

Buck Ford & Pure Country Band: Check Website for schedule, <https://buckford.com/events/>

CA Old Time Fiddlers Association, Meets 2nd Sunday. Orangevale Grange on Walnut Avenue in Orangevale, CA. [www.cbaontheweb.org/region_details.asp? Region 2](http://www.cbaontheweb.org/region_details.asp?Region%202)

Carolyn Sills Combo: <https://www.carolynsills.com/>

Cowtown Society of Western Music, Contact: Joe Baker, Membership Director, 940-452-6300, 4361 F.M. 1195, Mineral Springs, TX 76067

Grace Clark & Swingitude: <http://www.GraceAClarkMusic.com>

Greater Arizona Country/Western Swing Association and Hall of Fame, Inc. PO Box 953, Dewey, AZ 86326. Contact Jim Gamble at 928-458-0714.

Hot Club of Cowtown: <https://hotclubofcowtown.com/>

Lincoln Highway Band <https://www.facebook.com/lincolnhighwaybandca/>

Northwest Western Swing Music Society, Contact: Jeannie Yearian, President, 425-432-7888, or cell 206-271-2295, Lynnwood Eagles, 19223 Hwy. 99, Lynnwood, WA. **Meets 2nd Sunday** www.nwwsms.com

Sactown Playboys @ <https://www.facebook.com/sactownpbs/>

Slade Rivers Band: <https://sladeriversband.com/events/>

Western Swing Music Society of the Southwest, PO Box 644, Shattuck, OK 73858. **Meets quarterly.** Go to website at: www.wsmss.com.



Board Meeting Invitation

You can attend the Society's monthly Board meetings; first Sunday of each month starting at 10:30 a.m. in the Machinists Hall in Rancho Cordova.

We buy, sell, & trade new & used gear!
-- Free appraisals --
Serving the Western Swing Society for over 45 years!

Elk Grove (916) 686 - 5666 www.skipsmusic.com
 2740 Auburn Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95821 (916) 484 - 7575

MEMBERSHIP

Any Changes? Keep us up to date on any changes in your membership information, especially email addresses. We can't get your newsletter to you unless we have your current information.

You can mail changes in your information to the Society at P.O. Box 2474, Carmichael, CA 95609; or email it to

membership@westernswingsociety.net
 Thanks! Keep on Western Swingin'

MONTHLY MUSIC SESSIONS

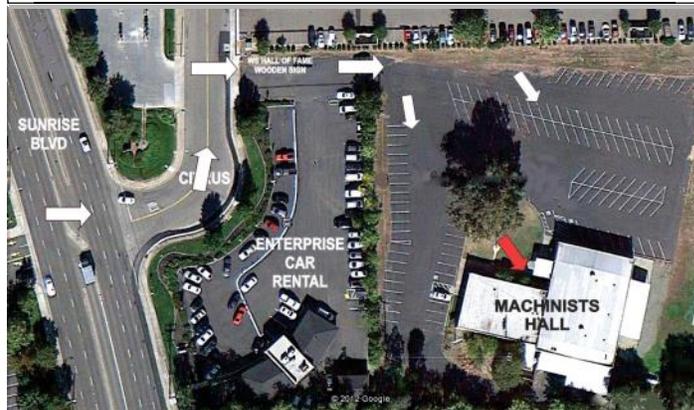
The Western Swing Society holds a music and dance session on the first Sunday of each month, featuring guest bands and artists and jam sets.

1:00 pm to 5:00 pm at The Machinists Hall
 2749 Sunrise Blvd., Rancho Cordova, CA*

Donation: \$5 for Members; \$8 for Non-Members

For information, browse to www.westernswingsociety.net

*The address is Sunrise, but the driveway is on Citrus.



Driving Instructions to MACHINISTS HALL: From Hwy 50, take the Sunrise Blvd. South exit and cross two lights (Folsom Blvd. and Trade Center Drive). After crossing Trade Center, be in the left lane and take the next left turn which is Citrus Road. You will see an Enterprise Car Rental lot in front of you. Turn right into the driveway just past Enterprise. You'll see our sign, and you are there. Park, come in and join the fun.