

King of the Blues

By JONATHAN PHILLIPS
Mega Columnist

Long about 8 Friday evenin', Cammie was getting hungry.

After a long week at work, who wouldn't be? But her husband Fred had notified her that they were going out to eat, and that it would be late. He hadn't told her where they were going or why so late.

Cammie fought off the urge to eat cheese and crackers, and kept her curiosity at bay as Fred headed west.

Why they passed the Red Lobster, Cammie's favorite restaurant and where she had guessed Fred would take her, she could stand it no longer.

"Fred, you got to tell me where you takin' me," she said.

"We're goin' to see B.B. King," he said.

Fred will get right good treatment around his house for awhile.

Fred and Cammie grew up when B.B. King was a staple on the juke boxes at black dance halls; when and where everybody knew the words to "Rock Me Baby," "Every Day I Got the Blues", and "Sweet Sixteen."

Cammie never forgot, and never lets her two kids, ages 10 and 14, forget either.

"When I want to get rid of them without telling them to get lost, I put on one of my B.B. King albums," she said. "They say 'aaaawwww mommm' and tell me they wanna hear Kool and the Gang or Rick James. But when I'm in charge of the record player, we're gonna hear B.B."

I grew up when, believe it or not, WQDR in Raleigh was one of the most progressive FM stations in the country. Somebody there realized what rock stars like the Marshall Tucker Band and Eric Clapton would be the first to admit—that they got a lot of their licks from black blues artists like Gatemouth Brown, Muddy Waters, and B.B. King.

So every now and then, WQDR would make a token effort to throw a blues song on the turntable. Most often it was King's "The Thrill is Gone", with those unforgettable guitar runs over top of the soft, steady blues rhythm.

Thanks to that exposure, when I heard that same guitar style on a blues show on WUVT in Blacksburg, Virginia years later, I knew who it was, and what it was, and was overjoyed to hear more of it.

Cammie's ol' man was taking her out for a treat, and I was dragging my ol' lady out to see B.B. King. We all four loved it, and it didn't matter a bit whether you got there through black dance halls in North Jersey or white radio stations in Raleigh. Just long as you got there.

Every now and then you run up on somebody that does their job as well as it can be done. You can tell by the look in their eye, the way they move, and the vibes they give off that they are gonna get the job done, and that they are gonna do it better than the rest.

You can see it when Moses Malone walks onto the court in the fourth quarter, with the sweat pouring off like a waterfall, that scowl on his face, and the money on the line.

You can see it when B.B. King takes the stage, with the B.B. King orchestra blowing their faces out, and his black Gibson guitar, Lucille, strapped around his massive frame.

You can hear it when he makes Lucille sing, in that unique way that every guitar picker knows and no guitar picker can duplicate. It'll get you out of your chair when that deep roaring voice opens up, with just as much power, and maybe more, than when it started out in the music business 36 years ago.

We saw B.B. King in a club with the kind of plastic Polynesian decor that makes it look like Ricky Ricardo should be the opening act.

Meanwhile, major league stadiums are sold out by skinny white boys in leotards who aren't fit to plug in B.B. King's amplifiers.

Meanwhile, so-called "soul" stations play monotonous thump-thump-thump music made by machines, with the machines overseen by black and white punks wearing outfits that Liberace wouldn't be seen in; marshalled across the airwaves by loudmouth DJ's who wouldn't know real rhythm and

blues if it came up and bit them on the rear end.

In the long run, however, class will out.

Punks in rhinestones come and go, but after 36 years B.B. can play "Rock Me" and still get the whole joint on its feet.

Long after me and B.B. both are dead and gone, folks will remember what Lucille had to say. Two weeks after the latest thump-thump-thump hits fade from the charts, who will remember the computers programmed to produce the sequence of thumps?

Mr. King said it as well as anybody in the chorus of a Joe Sample song he played for me and Mrs. Columnist and Cammie and Fred:

"When it all comes down

Look for me . . .

I'll still be around."

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Board Approves Public Transit Projects

RALEIGH—The state Board of Transportation has approved 14 projects that would provide nearly \$1 million in federal, state and local funds for public transportation projects in 21 counties statewide.

Board's approval, which came at its August 12 meeting in Raleigh, allocated over \$128,000 in state funds to match federal and local monies for the projects.

Approval of the projects was recommended to the board by the Public Transportation Advisory Council, which met earlier this month.

"The board's approval of these projects reflects the department's commitment to provide a comprehensive public transportation system to all the citizens of our state," said North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Secretary W.R. Roberson, Jr.

"Public transportation is and always will be a vital part of this state's entire transportation system," he said.

Among the projects approved by the board was one for the construction of a "park and ride" lot in the Orange County town of Carrboro. The lot will be located at the Telo Shopping Center on the NC-54 Bypass just west of the town.

Developed jointly by the town and a private developer, it will include 182 parking spaces, a shelter and a bus turnout.

Construction of the lot will help ease congestion and parking problems in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area, according to David King, director of the department's public transportation division.

"Motorists entering the urbanized areas from the west will have an opportunity to park their vehicles and switch to carpooling and transit into the city," King said.

Another significant feature of the project, according to King, is cooperative between the town and developer.

"This is the first time that the private and public sectors have cooperated to build a 'park and ride' lot from the beginning," he said.

The federal government will provide \$105,986 or 80 percent of project funding with the developer providing \$17,982 or 13.6 percent. The remaining 6.4 percent will be split between the state and town. Total cost of the project is \$132,483.

The board also approved two projects that provide capital, administrative and operating assistance for rural and public transportation systems in Salisbury and a four-county area in north-central North Carolina.

The Salisbury project provides additional funds to complete construction of a transit maintenance facility. Of the \$256,537 in additional funds, the federal government will pick up 80 percent of the project costs with the remaining 20 percent being split between the city and the state.

The Kerr Area Transportation Authority, which includes the counties of Granville, Person, Vance, Warren, will receive 37 mobile radios, one base station, a radio tower, a microcomputer, office equipment as well as funds for administrative cost. This new four-county system has been under consideration for more than a year and is expected to

provide better public transportation in the area at lower cost.

Total project costs are set at \$269,930 of which the 80 percent will come from federal funds. The remaining 20 percent will be split between the state and counties which make up the authority.

Other projects approved by the board included \$153,095 to Chapel Hill for the purchase of transit support vehicles, a lift-equipped vehicle, maintenance and repair equipment, office equipment, a microcomputer, furniture and four mobile radios. The project also includes funds to renovate a parking area at the transit maintenance and operations facility and planning funds.

Federal funds account for 80 percent of the total project costs with the remaining 20 percent being split equally between the state and local government.

Also included was \$14,010 to Yellow Cab Company in Greensboro to test a new shared-ride taxi service to increase the mobility of the city's elderly and handicapped citizens. The service will use new taxi meters which automatically discount the fare of all riders each time a new rider is added to the trip.

Ninety percent of the project costs will be provided by the state with the remaining 10 percent put up by the city.

To The Editor:

On behalf of the fishing community, I wish to ask Representative Howard Chapin, D-Beaufort, how he thinks his blatant support of Peat Methanol Associates will promote the best interests of his constituency in the 2nd District? How would this massive drainage project with its potential mercury pollution help the seafood industry? Commercial and sports fishing provides income as well as enjoyment for thousands of citizens in eastern North Carolina.

P.M.A. threatens to destroy our entire livelihood.

Mr. Chapin introduced a bill in the General Assembly that would give a 20% tax credit to peat mining interests. He has openly supported P.M.A. in Raleigh, but claims to know nothing about peat mining when questioned about the disastrous effects of peat mining on the fishing industry.

Is Mr. Chapin so gullible that he believes the smooth talking P.M.A. front men who have wine and dined the legislators in Raleigh? Apparently, he prefers their lies to the harsh reality of economic disaster and environmental degradation that would surely follow the strip mining of 15,000 to 100,000 acres of the Albemarle-Pamlico peninsula.

What will Mr. Chapin say to the voters who trusted him to protect their interests in Raleigh? I suggest that Mr. Chapin will have an impossible task if he attempts to reconcile his current P.M.A. stance with the best interests of the voters in eastern North Carolina.

Think it over, Mr. Chapin. We ask you to learn the real facts about P.M.A. and join us to fight this threat to our economy in eastern North Carolina.

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