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Carson Lowry draws on his 'hillbilly' roots for songs

By Sandra Knipe
Entertainment reporter

Carson Lowry has never played for 10,000 people at one time.

But he figures he's played 10,000 concerts "one on one." "So, I guess I can say I've played for 10,000 people," said Lowry, star of "Carson Lowry's Country Bluegrass Picking and Singing," a monthly bluegrass jamboree at the C.K. Newsome Community Center.

Although Lowry isn't above strapping on a guitar and playing for an audience of one, he draws from 25 to 75 people on the first Sunday of each month at the C.K. Newsome Center and is known throughout the Tri-State for his concerts at nursing homes and fund-raising events.

"I never went any place and played that they didn't ask me back," Lowry, 59, said during an interview in the East Side home he shares with his wife, Rosemary.

Twenty-five years ago, Lowry had written some songs and thought he had a pretty fair run at making a living as a country singer — but he decided that wasn't the right kind of life for a man with five children and a good paying job with the railroad. Today, despite two heart attacks, an arthritic spine and high blood pressure, he counts himself a lucky man.

"It's like being in heaven — doing what you like to do," said Lowry, who plays the guitar, fiddle, mandolin and harmonica, and sings a variety of country, gospel, folk and bluegrass music. Gospel is his favorite.

He's played with such well-known country performers as Roy Acuff, Grandpa Jones, Charlie Pride and "Mr. Banjo" Buck Trent. Twenty-five years ago, he lent Acuff a Will Rogers record that he never got back, but he found another one just like it at the Salvation Army.

Many of Lowry's stories and songs reach back to his childhood in Robeson County, N.C., where he grew up with 19 brothers and sisters and a heritage he traces to the "Lost Colony." (The 117 members of the Lost Colony of Roanoke Island, off the shore of North Carolina, disappeared between 1587

and 1590, leaving only the word "Croatoan" carved on a tree. Some believe the colonists may have married into an Indian tribe.)

Lowry carries a card in his wallet showing his membership in the Lumbee American Indian Tribe of Pembroke, N.C., and subscribes to The Carolina Indian Voice in Robeson County. He said his father, who died when he was 8, was a trustee of the first Indian College, now Pembroke State University.

"My Dad was a second cousin to President Rutherford B. Hayes," said Lowry, explaining that his Indian grandmother had eight children with a relative of Hayes, although the law of the day prevented them from marrying.

Some of those 19 brothers and sisters were half-brothers and sis-

ter, as Lowry's father married twice.

his attempt to escape, the paratrooper was met at the door by the pool stick-wielding deputy who felled him with one blow. One night in jail to sober up turned into an extended engagement with the MPs.

"These little hick towns aren't as hicky as you think when it comes to the law," Lowry said.

"Hick" and "hillbilly" are terms with which Lowry — who recalls that until the 1970s bluegrass was "just hillbilly music" — grew up. The first time it hurt his feelings, however, was at the age of 18, when he had left home for Chicago. He recalled walking down the street carrying his guitar and hearing the taunts of urban dwellers, asking the "hillbilly" if he thought he was still walking in cow piles.

Lowry remembers playing some pretty tough places during his five years in Chicago. One time, in an incident in a bar which seems to grieve him now, he had to hit a man over the head. The man had tried to take away Lowry's brand new Martin guitar because Lowry didn't know the words to a song he requested.

Another time, hungry and penniless in Chicago, Lowry tried to pull the old "I must have lost my wallet. Can I pay you later?" trick on the young proprietress of an Italian take-out restaurant. The young woman rushed him to the door, telling him to run quickly to the park where he left it before some dishonest person took it.

"I was running down the street, until finally it hit me, 'What am I running for? I didn't lose my wallet.'"

If he suspects his listener doubts his veracity, the storyteller cocks his head and says, "You believe me don't you? These are all true stories. I may joke around, but I don't lie."

Today, Lowry smilingly describes himself as a "God-fearing man whether I strike you that way or not" whose fondest ambition is to write "a great gospel song."

In the meantime, he's planning to get the songs he has written on tape before he forgets the words.

Lowry will be picking and singing from 2 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday at the C.K. Newsome Community Center, 100 E. Walnut St. Admission is free.

"It's like being in heaven — doing what you like to do"

Carson Lowry



By Allen Mayo

BLUEGRASS MAN — Carson Lowry of Evansville tried his luck at becoming a professional musician but decided he needed a steady railroad job to support his family. Today the 59-year-old musician performs in a monthly bluegrass jamboree at the C.K. Newsome Center as well as at local nursing homes and at fund-raising events.

GOLDEN POND MANOR NOW OPEN OFFERING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY

Golden Pond Manor is a Section 8, HUD 202, elderly housing complex built on South Austin Street, Maxton, NC. There are 32 apartments. If a person is 62 years old or older, or under 62 and is disabled and/or handicapped, and on a limited income, such as social security, supplemental security income, retirement income, etc., this would be "affordable housing" for them. The rent is based on their income, less deduction of medical expenses in excess of 3% of their income and a \$400 household allowance deduction.

Golden Pond Manor, Inc., is the owner of this non-profit complex. Christine Griffin is the president, Eugene Jernigan is vice president, Margaret Butler is the secretary, Julia Gregory is the treasurer, and David Malloy is the assistant secretary.

Golden Pond Manor, Inc. has as its sponsor The Senior Citizens Action Group (SCAG), of Maxton, NC, and John H. Wellons Foundation, Inc. (formerly Wellons Foundation, Inc.) of Dunn, NC. The sponsor and co-sponsor make up the directors of Golden Pond Manor, Inc. SCAG has Margaret Butler as president, CEO and acting director. SCAG, a non-profit organization, was founded in March, 1985 with Mabel Ozendine as president, founder and chairman of the board of directors. This organization was culminated and incorporated for the purpose of building, operating and maintaining a multipurpose, non-profit Senior Citizens Center, which would include residential home and day-care services, to serve the physical, social and spiritual needs of senior citizens in southeastern North Carolina. This center has been put on hold until Golden Pond Manor has been built.

John H. Wellons Foundation, Inc.

This foundation was formed by John H. Wellons of Dunn, NC over 40 years ago. The purpose for which this

corporation was formed and the business and objects to be carried on and promoted by it are charitable, scientific, benevolent or educational purposes, and in this connection to provide elderly persons and handicapped persons with housing facilities and services especially designed to meet their physical, social and physiological needs and to promote their health, security, happiness and usefulness in longer living, the charges and services to be predicated upon the provision, maintenance and operation thereof, on a non-profit basis.

Mr. John H. Wellons, president of John H. Wellons Foundation, Inc., has over 25 years experience in the development, construction and management of single and multifamily housing, as well as commercial property. The corporation has been active in the real estate business. The members of the board of trustees have a wealth of experience. The foundation's income is derived primarily from four sources: income from rental properties, interest from student loans, interest and dividends on investments and donations.

The ground breaking ceremony was held on December 20, 1989, at Golden Pond Manor with Margaret Butler of SCAG officiating. The housing complex will be home to 32 or more residents, with a community room, administrative office, laundry room, and maintenance room. This is an additional facility that Maxton can be proud of.

Wellons Foundation Management Services of Dunn, NC will manage the complex for Golden Pond Manor, Inc. Richard Mewborn is general manager, and Sylvia White is the office manager. Mr. Mewborn has an extensive background in the management of property in multifamily housing both in Farmers Home, HUD, and conventional complexes. Mr. Mewborn stated that he welcomes this opportunity to aid senior citizens in acquiring affordable housing in the Maxton area.

Rural Center To Fund Indian Cultural Center

Raleigh--The board of directors of the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center announced recently that it will award \$50,000 to the North Carolina Indian Cultural Center in Pembroke to allow the center to move into its first phase of development.

The goal of the Indian Cultural Center is to develop a large tourist and cultural center based on the history of North Carolina's Native American population. The cultural center currently owns or manages 350 acres of land, twelve miles from I-95 in Robeson County near Pembroke State University and the Lumber River.

The center is designed to stimulate the local economy as well as to provide an important source of education and information for visitors from other areas. It is anticipated that when fully operational, the cultural center will result in as many as 500 full time and 1,500 seasonal jobs.

Funds from the Rural Center will be used to develop a strategic plan for the Indian Cultural Center that will include identification of specific

aspects of the culture to be exhibited; development of appropriate presentations and activities; development of a marketing strategy; and development of a fundraising strategy.

The center joins several organizations in funding the project. The N.C. General Assembly has invested in \$1.5 million in land acquisition and architectural design and development. In addition, \$200,000 in funds is to be received from the Administration for Native Americans for each of the up coming three years. Matching money has come from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and Sara Lee Corporation and is expected from other organizations.

Phase I, which will include creation of an Indian village complex, walking trails and a visitors center, is scheduled for completion in 1992.

The N.C. Rural Economic Development Center was created in January 1987 for the purpose of improving economic conditions in the state's rural areas. The center funds projects across the state which show promise for promoting local growth and for serving as models for other communities.

FARM BUREAU FEDERATION PRESENTS SCHOLARSHIPS

Six high school seniors have been selected by the North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation to receive scholarships that are each worth \$1,250 annually for four years of study.

Receiving the awards are: David Andrew Griffin, Route 2, Spring Hope; Amber Michelle Hemric, Route 3, Hamptonville; Daniel Johnson Houser, Route 2, Vale; William

David McCracken, Route 3, Waynesville; Deana Lynn Robinson, Mount Gilead; and Scott Avery Vinson, Maury.

W.B. Jenkins, president of the N.C. Farm Bureau, said the scholarship program emphasizes the importance of educational and leadership training for young people in the fields of agriculture and home economics. To qualify for a Farm

LOWRY AWARDED ADVANCED CERTIFICATE

William A. Lowry of N.C. Department of Correction was awarded the Advanced Criminal Justice Certificate by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education Standards Commission on May 18, 1990. Lowry works with Adult Probation/Parole with the N.C. Department of Correction.

The Advanced Certificate is the highest professional certificate awarded to law enforcement and criminal justice officers in North Carolina. Typically, only 275-300 Advanced Certificates are awarded yearly by the Standards Commission.

To qualify for the Advanced Certificate, officers must complete a combination of professional training and relevant education, as well as meet minimum experience requirements.

The Standards Commission certifies all of the State's law enforcement officers, correctional officers, probation and parole officers, company police, and other specialties. It also established minimum employment and training standards, training content, and instructor standards. The Commission maintains certification files on over 22,000 criminal justice officers.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

MADD Interest Meeting Planned
Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) will hold a meeting in the O.P. Owens Agriculture Building on June 19 at 8 p.m. Anyone interested in helping to form a local chapter of MADD is encouraged to attend this

meeting.
N.C. Certification Workshop Planned
The North Carolina Department of Administration's Division of Purchase and Contract will conduct a State Certification Workshop for Women, Minority and Disabled

Business Owners at Pembroke State University on May 30 at 7 p.m. Senate Bill 308 will also be discussed. For additional information, contact: Bobby Griffin, Lumbee Regional Development Association, Inc. at (919)521-0354 or 521-0864.