

# Musicians' wives

*A lonely life: will he come home and be a normal husband*

By LYNN E. WILLIFORD  
Staff Writer

*"She tapes her regrets to the microphone stand; She says you can't hold the hand of a rock and roll man, for very long, or count on your plans with a rock and roll man for very long..."*

— Joni Mitchell

I was sitting in an all night restaurant, drinking coffee with the attractive guitarist whom I had met during a break in his concert that evening at a tavern. He was no international star, but I felt lucky to be the one he wanted to see after the show. After all, he had been bombarded all night by beautiful females who were obviously more interested in getting to know him than his music. After a pleasant conversation, he asked if he could see me the next week. Flattered, I accepted, but something inside me told me to ask the now-standard question I put to all potential dates who were not introduced to me by someone any closer to me than my father.

"You aren't married, are you?" I asked almost as a joke.

He hesitated a moment, then grinned weakly. "Well, not tonight."

That was the end of any romantic thoughts I may have had for this man, but the beginning of my curiosity as to what his wife was like. An innocent little homemaker who patiently knitted him sweaters and waited up for him to

come home after performances? A fiery feminist who advocated open marriage? An abandoned woman whose own infidelity drove him to seek the comfort of other women?

I started to ask around and found five wives willing to talk about what it is like to be married to such glittering men of the stage lights. Each one asked me not to use real names for fear that it would damage their marriages or their husband's career.

"Betty" has been married three years to a bass fiddle player in a local bluegrass band. Like all the wives interviewed, she did not meet her husband during one of his performances.

*"Do you know what it's like to live out of a suitcase in a different motel every night?"*

*I wish one morning he would wake up with music amnesia and we could just settle where we were..."*

— Amy, a musician's wife

"I wasn't one of those pick-ups," she said emphatically. "We were introduced by a mutual friend, and on our first date he mentioned being a part-time musician."

"Betty" said that the first time she saw her husband's band play, she felt like an outsider. "On stage, he gives off a different personality

entirely. He's the emcee for the group and some of the jokes he tells... well I had previously thought of him as a shy person." She blushed slightly. "It was then that I began to see that his band and I were two separate loves in his life."

"Betty" and three of the other wives interviewed said that they rarely, if ever, attend their husbands' performances.

"Janet," the wife of the drummer in a local rock group, said that she gets enough of the band's music during their weekly jam sessions in her basement. "Hell, I know all their songs by heart. It's no big thrill for me to hear a rerun night after night. Besides, the group is still relatively unknown outside a fifty mile radius of Chapel Hill. When and if they ever go 'big time,' I'll go see them."

"The other wives of the group members never go," she continued. "The few times I've been to see the group in concert, I've had to sit alone out in the audience. It can be the loneliest thing in the world to sit by yourself while your husband is up there getting screamed at by a bunch of teenage girls and strange men are coming up to your table asking if they can buy you a beer."

Staying at home while he's on the road is also rough. "Kathy," whose husband is a member of another bluegrass band that often plays at festivals as far as 1,000 miles away, says it's frustrating. "At first, I would go over and have a few drinks with one of the other wives in the group. But we had little in common with each other, and the conversation was always about

our husbands and what they were probably doing at any given moment. It was more depressing than sitting at home alone watching television."

"Kathy's" husband doesn't have another job. She works as a secretary during the week to supplement the money her husband makes from his weekend work. "I come home at night and my husband has been sleeping most of the day," she said. "All I want to do is to eat a quiet supper with him and crawl in the sack. But no, most nights he's either out practicing some new material with the group or on the phone making new engagements for the weekend. Then come Friday, he's off again."

She frowned as she spoke. "What makes me mad is that my work is dull, but his is fun. He comes home exhausted, but happy, and can't understand why I don't want to hear every detail about his wonderful weekend for which he got paid a measly \$50."

"Amy" is married to a solo performer who travels almost all the time, and she goes with him. "Do you know what it's like to live out of a suitcase in a different motel every night?" she asked. "It was fun when we were newlyweds, but soon every motel room started to look the same. I bet I've eaten at more restaurants than any woman in the country. I wish one morning he would wake up with music amnesia and we could just settle where we were and he could get a nine-to-five job at a bank or something."

All of the wives interviewed spoke of marital troubles. Three of the women had left their

husbands at least once over matters related to their husbands' work. "I was surprised he even realized I was gone," said "Martha," whose husband plays up to five nights a week.

When asked specifically what caused the separation, she replied, "Groupies."

Groupies, or girls who frequent shows for the express purpose of being physically close to the performers, did not bother two of the wives interviewed because they said their husbands are "too old." But Martha said of groupies: "My husband can't seem to keep his hands off of them. He tells me that he has to keep up 'public relations' with the audience so they'll come back the next time he plays there. But he doesn't have to leave them all with a kiss. And God knows what else when I'm not there."

"And these damned little teenagers aren't the only ones in on chasing musicians," she continued. "I've answered the phone and been asked to deliver the most explicit messages to my husband from middle-aged women who think I'm his secretary. It's disgusting."

"I guess these girls are my bread and butter," "Betty" commented. "But I never can get it off my mind that my husband might just find someone on the road and never come back someday."

"Someday" is a word all the wives spoke at some point in the interview. Someday, they all said in some way or another, maybe he'll get tired of all the performing. Someday, they say, we can settle down and have ordinary, even boring lives.

# Chapel Hill students know well the pleasure of imbibing in liquid libations

By NANCY HARTIS  
Staff Writer

After the long lines of registration, drop-add and book buying plus the problems of moving into that new dorm room or apartment, newly arriving students will indulge, as always, in a long-revered Carolina tradition: hell-raising and bar hopping.

For the tradition-minded Tar Heel, anxious to drown his sorrows, celebrate

life, meet people or "make friends," there are a large number and variety of bars in Chapel Hill-Carrboro to choose from.

Undeniably an institution among Chapel Bars, The Shack, located on Rosemary Street, offers a quaint, "Happy Days-ish" atmosphere within a graffiti-adorned and somewhat-precarious structure.

The female bartender, discounting The Shack's image as an exclusively

Greek haunt, boasts, "This bar was one of the reasons I was asked to quit school my senior year and I'm not in a sorority either!"

Uniquely located between The Shack and the Chapel Hill Police Department, Kirkpatrick's cold beer, pinball machines and jukebox attract a lively herd of students regularly. Says the manager, "It's the kind of place everybody can fit in — frats, sororities, jocks, underclassmen, upperclassmen

— you name it. Whatever you're looking for, you'll find it here."

In the same neighborhood, bar-hoppers will find He's Not Here and The Village Green, two bars which share the same two-story building and suds-loving clientele. Generally, intermingling of the crowds between the two bars gives the atmosphere of one great big party, which may account for the bar's popularity with almost everyone.

The crowds are diverse; The Village Green manager characterizes his customers as "between 20 and 25 years old, a lot of students but also a lot of townspeople."

"The Village Green used to have a reputation as a pretty rowdy place but we cleaned things up and the place has a really nice atmosphere now. It's a liberal crowd, though," he added.

He's Not Here-The Village Green features live bands on occasion and offers a large grassy outdoor courtyard

which stays crowded during warm seasons.

A lot of Carolina men understandably bring their dates to Harrison's Bar after a movie or dinner. Located on Franklin Street within easy walking distance of campus, Harrison's features taped music and domestic and imported beer within a setting of low lights, mirrors and lush plants that's downright romantic.

According to the manager, Harrison's customers represent a large cross-section; students, young professionals and business people as well as university professors seem to enjoy Harrison's distinctive atmosphere.

Across the street from Harrison's is the BBI, always a crowd pleaser with live bands, beer and foosball. Manager Johnny Jordan describes The BBI's patrons as "relatively nonchalant and friendly; very versatile age-wise."

Jordan claims his customers' ages range from 20 to 54. The BBI hires bands

ranging from rock and bluegrass to dance and folk groups.

On Rosemary Street behind Jordan's Steak Restaurant, there's Troll's Bar, whose claim to fame includes two game rooms aside from its main barroom, sandwiches, hamburgers and a color television, which is turned up and over the jukebox music during sports events.

Owner Sam Shaffer says, "The crowd is versatile. We like it that way. And we're a large bar; there's plenty of room to move around in — not wall-to-wall people."

Some other bars not within walking distance but well worth the effort to get there include Ye Olde Taverne, on Franklin Street, which has been under the same management longer than any other bar in town. The Taverne has a more student oriented atmosphere than it used to and features a variety of cold beers.

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