

Bluegrass and Mayberry

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by Shelby C. Berry

LeRoy Mack McNees caught the bluegrass bug in the 1950s when a friend played him a Flatt and Scruggs record. "Before that day, I had no experience with bluegrass at all," said LeRoy. "I grew up listening to rock and roll music, but the sound that came out of that record was mesmerizing. I'd never heard anything like it."

McNees saw a live 1959 broadcast of The Country Boys (later known as the Kentucky Colonels) and they invited LeRoy to jam with them where they practiced. "I was there almost every night with them, and then one day Roland, a member of the band, told me that they needed a dobro player and that I needed to learn to play so I could join the band. I found myself a dobro and started listening to records so I could learn how to play," said LeRoy.

The Kentucky Colonels recorded many albums and earned even more success after appearing on two episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show*. Decades later, LeRoy remains a fan-favorite at the Mayberry Days annual festival and has only missed one event since his first performance in 2001.

LeRoy committed his life to Jesus Christ in 1964 and left the band. He co-founded Born Again Bluegrass Band and spent more than 31 years of his life performing and cutting 12 albums with the group. Sadly, bandmate Steve Hatfield passed away and they dissolved the band.

"That band represented a turning point in my life. It was a spiritual experience. I wanted to do gospel music because I dedicated my life to the Lord at that time. It really was a

ministry for us," said LeRoy.

LeRoy and his wife hit the road traveling across the country, performing his solo music and accompanying artists all over the US and into Canada. He became a frequent guest of top artists like Vince Gill, John Denver, Nashville Bluegrass Band, and the Laurel Canyon Ramblers.

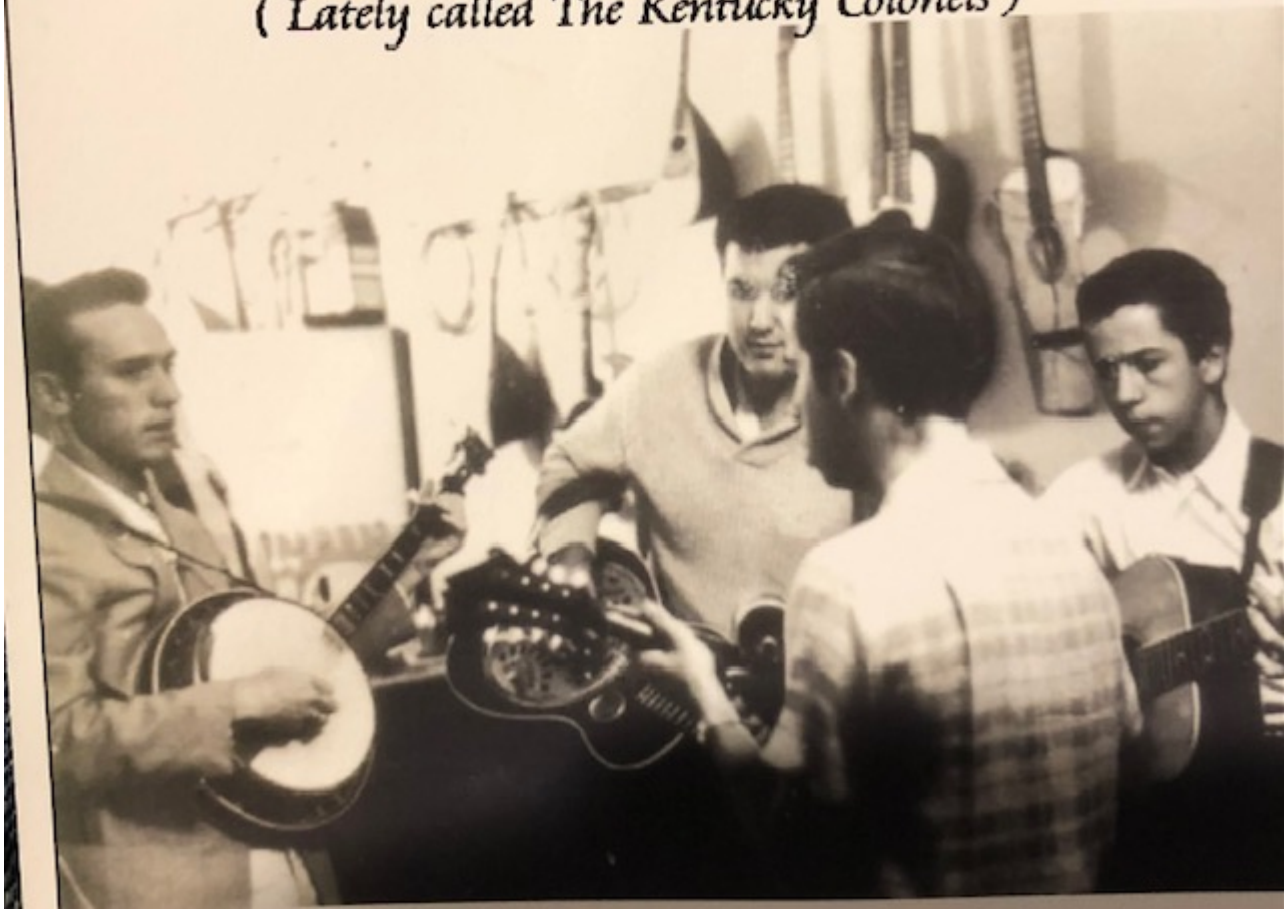
Eventually, LeRoy settled back down in his Los Angeles, California home and there he formed LeRoy Mack & Gloryland, a band of five seasoned fast-pickin', fun-strummin', and foot-stompin' musicians: LeRoy (dobro), Craig Wilson (guitar), Roger Phillips (banjo), and Charlie Davis (bass).

LeRoy had long been applauded in the bluegrass genre when he earned the prestigious LA Treasure Award for Outstanding Contributions to the City of Los Angeles in Bluegrass in 2005. Fourteen years later, the Kentucky Colonels were inducted into the International Bluegrass Music Association Hall of Fame, evidencing his treasured impact on bluegrass.

Enjoy this intimate Bluegrass Standard interview with Leroy Mack McNeas:

THE COUNTRY BOYS

(Lately called The Kentucky Colonels)

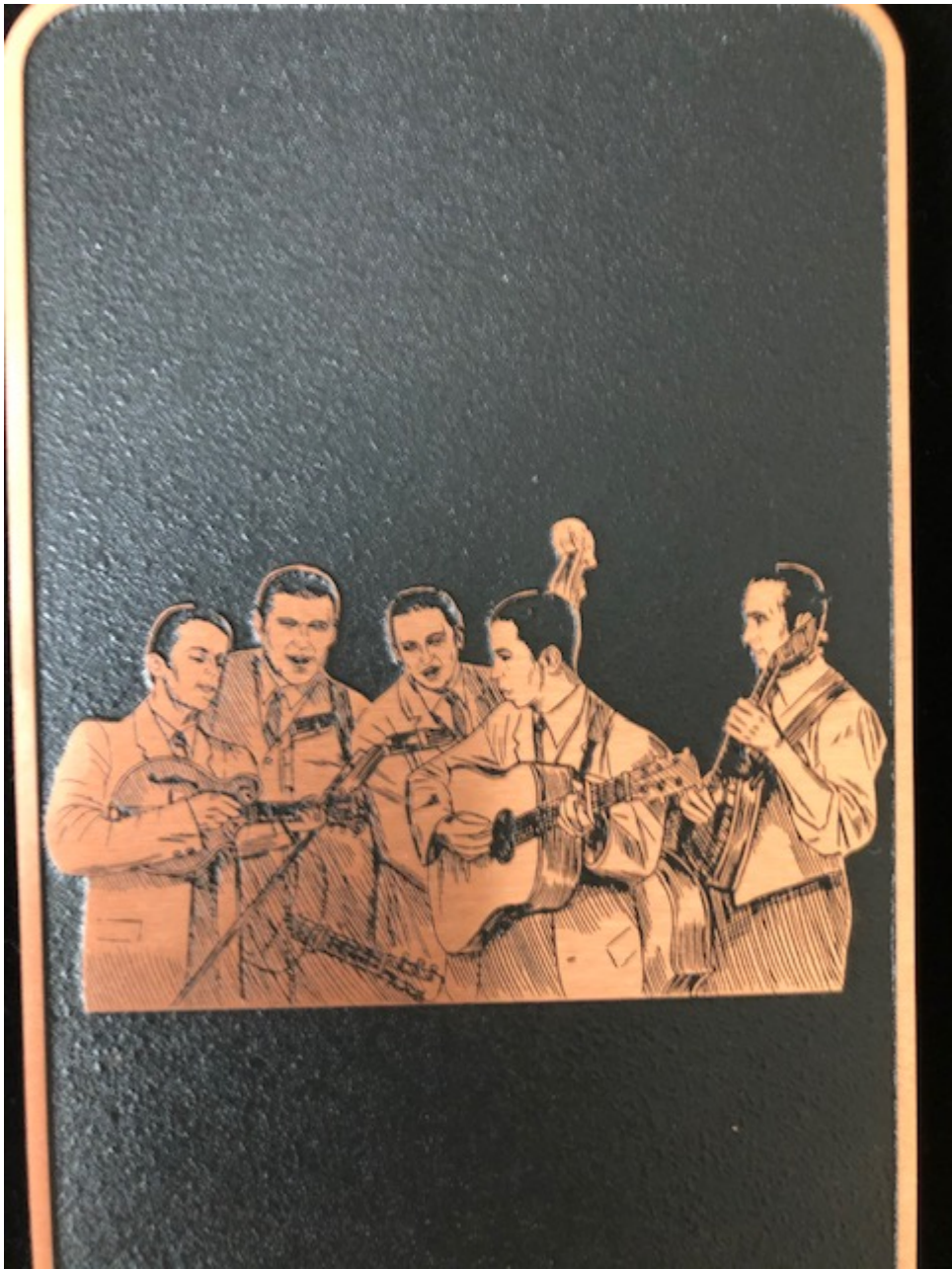












In recognition of the
significant contributions
to bluegrass music
which warrant that the

**KENTUCKY
COLONELS**

are duly inducted into
**The International Bluegrass
Music Association's
HALL OF FAME**
September 26, 2019



IBMA

INTERNATIONAL BLUEGRASS MUSIC ASSOCIATION



The Andy Griffith Show Episode 19 Mayberry On Record





The Bluegrass Standard (BGS): What rewarded you most through your musical experiences?

LeRoy Mack McNeas (LM): I would say the whole experience of learning how to play. The love of the music is the high point for me and playing with really great players.

BGS: Tell us a little about *The Andy Griffith Show*?

LM: In 1961, we did Andy Griffith. It aired on Feb 13, 1961. It's been a big part of the Kentucky Colonels' legacy. It's never been off the air.

BGS: Why did you go solo after being with a band for so long?

LM: I started doing solo music when Steve passed, and we dissolved Born Again Bluegrass. At this time, my wife and I started traveling during the summer. We started traveling around the US, going to festivals, and doing dobro workshops. More times than not, bands would ask me to sit in with them

when they played. I did that for 10 years all over Canada and the US. In 2004, we sold our business and went full-time in our motor home. We made some wonderful friends! It was the highlight of our lives. We would make a lap around the US and Canada through the year. We saw different parts of the world too! England, Ireland, Slovakia and even more places. In 2015, we sold our motor home and decided to settle down a little bit. When I got back, I missed the band experience. I played but didn't have the camaraderie. So, I started LeRoy Mack & Gloryland. It's been 3-4 years of that now.

BGS: Your favorite place to perform?

LM: One of the festivals in California by the California Bluegrass Association in Grass Valley. We've been going there for about 30 years. My wife and I have put on a chapel service on Sunday morning at that festival almost that long. We started chapel services at many other festivals over the years. We even used to do IBMA when it was on Sundays too.

BGS: Working with bluegrass and country artists, what was a memorable collaboration?

LM: There's a band in British Columbia called Jerusalem Ridge. We even did an album together! And Canadian Grass Unit from New Brunswick, Canada. I really enjoyed playing with them a few different times.

BGS: What's happening with LeRoy Mack & Gloryland?

LM: We just got together for the first time in 13 months last week. We started working on some of our old stuff anticipating that we will get to go out and perform sometime soon.

BGS: What does your music reveal about you to the world?

LM: Well, the neat thing is that sharing gospel music is really life-giving and encouraging. We do a lot of humor with our presentation too! It's great to see people listening and

enjoying music.

BGS: What one message do you want to send to your fans?

LM: Well, the message of our music is the gospel, so we would say to trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding.

<https://youtu.be/7TnJkqH1W2Y>