

# Kentucky Just Us

By Susan Marquez

*They're a family band, they work hard, and they have enjoyed success in their field. Kentucky Just Us is a prime example of how life can change when you least expect it. "I went to school to be a biology and chemistry teacher," laughs Terry O'Neal, the patriarch of the family. "I never dreamed of having a family band."*

It all started with the family driving and singing. "We realized the kids had the natural ability to harmonize really well," says Terry. Both Terry and his wife, Shelane, play music. "I played keyboard, mostly in churches, and I was in a few Gospel groups when I was young. Shelane sings and plays the upright bass." But music wasn't something Terry and Shelane had much time for once children started coming, other than Terry teaching piano lessons from time to time. That all changed when the kids began singing together.

*"They asked me if I'd help them, and I said I would, but they had to agree to sing any time or any place I asked them to. They agreed, and we started practicing. All we had was a guitar and the kids' voices."*

*On a cool evening in October 2014, on the way to a family outing to a local restaurant, Terry told the kids they'd have to sing for their supper. The kids laughed and went inside. They were just finishing up when Terry got up to go talk to their waitress. He asked if they could stand up and sing. The waitress said it would be fine, so Terry told the kids to get up and sing. "They were shaking like leaves, but they did a*

very good job." The manager heard the kids sing and invited them to come back and perform.

Since that time, the kids have learned to play instruments, including the fiddle, mandolin and banjo. John, the oldest of the group at age 19, plays mandolin and guitar. He also writes songs. Kacey is 18 and is a vocalist in addition to playing fiddle and writing songs. Jesse is 16 years old and plays banjo. Terry laughs as he describes Jesse as being the comedian of the group. "We never know what will come out of his mouth!" Jesse is also an accomplished songwriter. Caleb, the baby, is nine years old and plays mandolin and sings. He can also play the guitar and the mountain dulcimer. "He's learned about 14 songs now, so he's on stage a lot now," Terry says.



In addition to playing with the band, John does the arrangements for each song while Kacey manages merchandise and social media. Shelane plays bass for the group, keeping them "in time and in line." Terry plays keyboard and occasionally plays rhythm guitar. He also serves as the band's manager, booking agent, van driver and sound man.

"We've been blessed," says Terry. "When we first started, we

*didn't know much about bluegrass or the music business. We played at a competition at a bluegrass festival in Kentucky and came across the Moron Brothers. They told us to talk to Dean Osborne. We went to tour the Hazard Community and Technical College's Kentucky School of Bluegrass and Traditional Music in Hyden, Kentucky." They enrolled and were instructed by Bobby Osborne, Dean Osborne, Virgil Bowlin and Scott Napier. "We were still playing on weekends and going to class during the week. We rented an apartment close by. It was difficult, but we made it work. It was worth it for the fantastic opportunities we had to study with such bluegrass greats." Kacey has also studied with legendary fiddle player Buddy Spicher and Jesse has studied with banjo extraordinaire Gary "Biscuit" Davis.*

*The band did 101 gigs last year and has played in venues such as the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville, Silver Dollar City in Branson, and several bluegrass festivals. They've been on television shows and were selected to be the first artists in residence of the Kentucky Music Hall of Fame and Museum.*

*Their first album, The Land of Bluegrass, was released in 2015 and included a song by Shelane called The One Who Knows All Things. "It's a Gospel tune," says Terry. "We also have a Gospel tune on our second CD. People have been asking if we'll do an all-Gospel CD, so that's our next project.*

*Throughout it all, the kids have been homeschooled, which works well for their lifestyle. Their success has never gone to their heads. "We call the band Kentucky Just Us because we are from Kentucky, and I tell the kids all the time, we don't need to be like anyone else. We just need to be us."*

**Visit Kentucky Just Us**

---

# ***Six Strings, a Song, and a Soldier***

*by Richelle Putnam*

*“Army Bands provide music throughout the spectrum of military operations to instill in our soldiers the will to fight and win, foster the support of our citizens, and promote our national interests at home and abroad.”*

*The US Army is the oldest and largest employer of musicians in the world, dating back to the Revolutionary War. As ambassadors to the nation, musician soldiers uphold 230 years of tradition, entertaining veterans, soldiers and communities through the Army Music Program that offers musicians opportunities to do what they do best—play music.*

*Sergeant First Class Marc Purinton joined the U.S. Army as a trumpet player in August 2002. Since*

*then, he served in the Infantry Center Band at Fort Benning, Georgia, the 8th Army Band in Seoul, South Korea, and the 1st Cavalry Division Band at Fort Hood, Texas. He has more than six years overseas experience, including a combat deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Since 2013, Sergeant Purinton has served in the U.S. Army Field Band and is currently a tour coordinator for Six-String Soldiers.*

*“Six-String Soldiers officially formed in February 2015,” said Purinton. “They had been performing together about two*

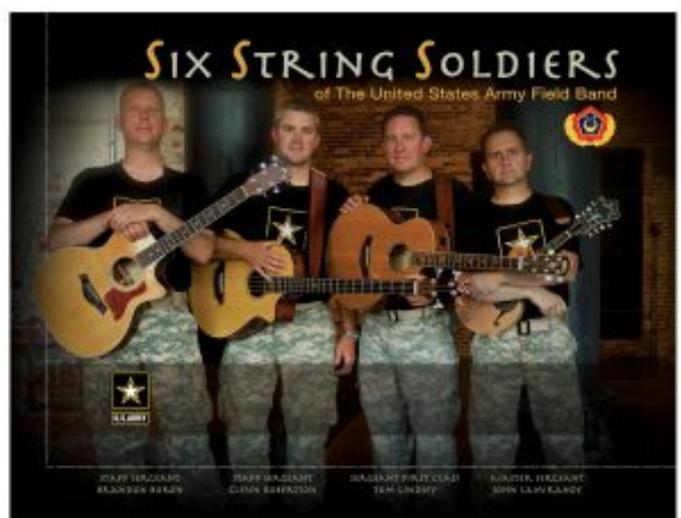
*or three years before that and were originally constituted as a rock band.”*

*Labeled as the Army’s premiere rock band of volunteers, the band toured the country for approximately 100 days out of the year, performing at VA hospitals and veteran facilities. However, smaller facilities weren’t suitable spaces for the heavy equipment of a rock band.*

*“We kind of formed as necessity,” said Purinton. “We got out our acoustic guitars and a couple of drum sets here and there and started playing in smaller spaces for those who didn’t have the opportunity to come out to our larger shows.”*

*All band members are active-duty soldiers with a full-time mission to show appreciation for the support of the American public and their support for the American soldier.*

*“It’s not just us that they are appreciating. It’s the people deployed overseas, the men and women of the Armed Forces everywhere around the world that we represent.”*



*“We all auditioned to get into Six-String Soldiers,” said Staff Sergeant John Brandon Bolon, who plays guitar with the group. “It’s a special assignment.” Some band members came*

straight into the music field, he explained. Others didn't. The sound guy was a diesel mechanic on boats, the banjo player is field artillery and served as a supply sergeant. "When I joined, I wanted to go to medical school to be a psychological specialist investigator. They found out that I had a musical background and asked me if I wanted to play in the band in Europe, so I tried out and I got into that gig."

The military is like a microcosm of society, according to Bolon. "You have the infantry and combat arms, but you also have other soldiers that support them, from cooks to doctors to media people." Most any career in the regular world can be found in the military. "We happened to be fortunate enough to be musicians in the military and it's a special job. We are called special bandsmen."

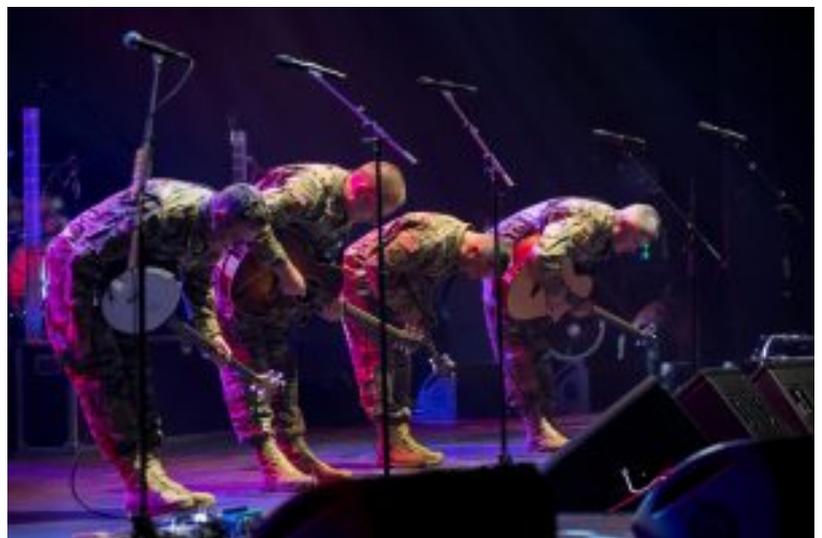
To promote the Six-String Soldiers band, shows, tour dates and video performances are posted on their Facebook page. One of the first videos posted was in February 2015 during a heavy snowstorm in the New England area where the band was touring.



"When one of the performances was cancelled due to weather, the guys went out to the snowbank by the hotel, which was about 10-feet high," said Purinton. "They played 'Here Comes the Sun.' Everybody got a kick out of it and the local news did a story." The video received around 9,000,000 views. "That was a good way to interact with the American public."

*Six-String Soldiers began as a side project, but took off because it resonated with people. The band has performed on national TV and opened for John Fogarty, who is a veteran.*

*“I’ve been fortunate enough to perform for the Prince and Princess of Monaco,” said Bolon. “I’ve played with the Vice President of the United States in the living room of the Ambassador to Iraq in Bagdad. I’ve also played for a handful of soldiers out by the Syrian border.” To play for the soldiers, to eat with them and hang out with them, brings a little feeling of home, he added. “It’s for morale, but also for camaraderie. Being a part of it is amazing.”*



*Typically, veterans are the older generation, Vietnam and Gulf War Vets, so the band plays music the veterans listened to back in the day, like Creedence Clear Water Revival. Music is therapy to the soldiers, said Purinton. Some VA facilities started programs that tie art and music into rehabilitation. “In this program, you’re teaching someone to play guitar or playing and singing together.” It’s like how the arts help in early childhood development through building, enhancing and improving the brain and motor skills. “It works wonders.”*

*“We couldn’t do it without the public support and are so grateful and honored to serve you all,” said Bolon. “We are proud of what we do.”*

*Those interested in catching a performance or concert, check the Six-String Soldiers Facebook page.*

---

## ***Speakin' to that Mountain – #13 January***

---

### ***Blue Moon Over Texas***

---

## ***The Quebe Sisters: CD Review***

*ARTIST: The Quebe Sisters*

*CD: The Quebe Sisters*

*Website: The Quebe Sisters*

*CD Release Date: September 2019*

*Reviewer: Mississippi Chris Sharp*

*email: mississippichris@bellsouth.net*

*I was sent a link to The Quebe Sisters Soundcloud page that had all the tracks of The Quebe Sisters self-titled CD. I listened to it and pondered the scope of the reviews I have been asked to do for The Bluegrass Standard. Some are hard-driving Bluegrass. Some are newgrass. Some are gospel. Some are raucous, rowdy old-time. Some are polished studio presentations. Some are precipitously live, warts and all. Some are released before they are through. Some are released long after they are through, with the post-production taking away from the performances. Some are recorded live in the studio. Some have more overdubs than a phlebotomist has needles. Some are jazzy, Dawgish, Flatt and Scruggish, Monroeish, Carterish, or Stanleyish. Some are tedious, unflattering, unenjoyable, unremarkable, unmarketable, and essentially unreviewable.*

*The Quebe Sisters self-titled CD is none of those things. If one adds another category of what this CD is not, one might rightly lump to It-Ain't- Bluegrass. It isn't, not by a long shot. Having consigned The Quebe Sisters to Blake's netherworld pandemonium of It-Ain't Bluegrass, I don't suppose it will bother the sisters much. They know their music isn't Bluegrass. They bill themselves as Progressive Western Swing and place themselves in the Americana genre on their Soundcloud page. After having made honestly derived observations of how to classify their music, we'll move on to the music itself.*

*It is delightful. It is transporting. It is nostalgic. It is sibling harmony and triple fiddles, all in true Texas style, a big band sound, although sparsely instrumented. It shouts of Bob Wills, Johnny Gimble, and Texas Two-Step. It strongly hints at Django Rhinehart and the Hot Club of France, Stephan Grapelli, Dinah Shore, Doris Day, The Mills Brothers, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Harry James, Lena Horne, Gene Autry, gives a welcome nod to Kenny Baker and smells of fresh,*

strong coffee boiled in big pots hanging on spits at cowboy campfires on quiet, star-lit open-range nights, the sky as big as all Texas, the cowboys thinking of their girls at home, both lonesome and cheered by the sounds of The Quebe Sisters. The cowboys likely didn't have music queued up on a smartphone, earbuds, or a way to charge their phones while on the trail, if they had had them. They'd likely have abandoned the roundup to go and catch a glimpse of The Quebe Sisters and hear their music live, or at least find a way to charge their phone for more of the second-best thing, which is still good. Their memories of this music would come easy, as they hunkered down in their bedrolls by the embers of the fire, as the soft echoes of the lullaby "Twilight on the Trail" soothed them to a restful repose, smiles on their faces, their peaceful sleep whispering dreams of their darlings at home.

I regret that their website did not disclose the names of each angel-voiced Quebe Sister, or which ones did the lead singing, or of the guitarist who played the archtop guitar, at times beating it into submission without mercy and at others displaying the tenderness of a mother's touch, and the bassist who had the tone, attack, timbre, and touch I admire. I could find no record label information, nor any song credits. Perhaps their label or publicist can make this information easier to find on their website. I regret I did not have the physical CD in my hand to look at all the liner notes.

While this whole CD was enjoyable, even soothing, I have my favorites. Kenny Baker's "Bluegrass in the Backwoods" just jumped out at me. I was thankful to have this tune brought back to my memory and performed so well. Kenny is no doubt smiling. "The Waltz You Saved for Me" and the aforementioned "Twilight on the Trail" were soft, soothing, like a balm for a tired soul. Other favorites are "Pierce the Blue", "Lullaby of the Leaves", and "Summer of Roses", each featuring

*profoundly tight sibling harmonies and a cohesive, spartan band, every note contributing to the whole sound, with the harmony of the triple fiddles always complimenting the vocal harmonies.*

*I keep reaching for the word soothing. I had wanted to hear this without knowing it existed. I had yearned for it. I longed to be touched by someone else's music. I am declaring myself to you now; I was more than touched. I was soothed.*

*I am looking forward to seeing The Quebe Sisters for myself, closing my eyes, lending my ears, and being soothed some more. Someone once told me I "Always Seem to Get Things Wrong" (a delightful two-stepping song on this CD). Well, I got this one right. Had I spent my money on this CD, I'd consider it well spent.*

---

## **Bluegrass Planet Radio Spans the Globe**

*by Kara Bachman*

*When she was just a little girl, Dawn Mac used to be intrigued by how her father's voice would float out across space and be heard in faraway lands.*

**He was a ham operator.**

*"It fascinated me that he'd get on the airwaves and talk to people across the world," she said about her dad, who she called her "inspiration."*

*At just eight or nine years old, she'd "play DJ." She loved music and when combined with the idea of having her voice heard across large distances, it was clear where her adult passions would lay.*

*"It was something that was in my blood from the very beginning," Mac said.*

*As president and founder of Bluegrass Planet Radio, it's no surprise that watching her dad talk into a microphone set her on the career path that's led to a successful 24/7 internet radio station that people across the globe listen to.*



*Mac's first radio show wasn't fancy. Heck, it wasn't even commercial; it was just a hobby she did for fun. She decided to host an internet radio show back in 2006 on one of the earlier versions of web-based radio, BlogTalk Radio. She decided to focus on music and interviews with indie artists who didn't have access to traditional radio formats. From there, her passion continued to grow.*

*"At one time, I was running five different podcasts for five different genres," she said. "As it started to get some traction and recognition, I had folks say, 'why don't you start a radio station?'"*

What they meant was something more than she'd been doing. They didn't mean podcast-style radio broadcasts. They didn't mean individual shows. They were suggesting she start a full-fledged 24/7 station. She'd been doing the bluegrass podcast since 2011, and thought the genre was perfect for expanding.

"I thought, maybe this is the time," she reminisced. "You can never have enough stations promoting all the great bluegrass music."

Today, Bluegrass Planet Radio is heard around the clock and is easily accessed via a free mobile app available from iTunes and Google Play Store. Not only does Mac play music by a broad range of today's bluegrass acts, but she also has affiliate programming that spans a wide range of interests. The station is truly comprehensive, and some might even say "eclectic."

For instance, listeners can tune in for the shows they'd expect, such as the Bluegrass Gospel Hour or Steve Martin's Unreal Bluegrass. But there's also a little variety that reaches into other genres. For instance, Mac airs a program called "It's Folk," which she describes as "folk, yet it's got an edge to it."

"People look at the roster and say, 'wow, you've got a little of everything,'" Mac said. "It's not all just Flatt and Scruggs any more...I wanted to create a station that was going to do more than what people would expect."

Mac said her personal taste isn't traditionalist.

"I'm more progressive, new grass, contemporary," she explained.

Although her own tastes might slightly affect the choices in affiliate broadcasts, she said she still tries to focus Bluegrass Planet Radio programming on meeting the needs of

*the listeners themselves. It's not so much about her own taste as it is about making a great station that others will enjoy.*

*"I try to give equal billing to all the bluegrass labels," she explained. "As a broadcaster, we get in advance what albums are coming out, what singles are gonna be released. Just about everything that comes out new goes on the station."*

*Bluegrass Planet Radio has a broad listenership, and they come from places where most people would never suspect. Mac said she pulls in fans from all sorts of places.*

*"There are tons and tons of international listeners that obviously dig bluegrass music in all its forms," Mac said. She added that some of her highest listener peaks result from fans tuning in from very far away. She sees activity from Japan, Germany, France, the UK, and many more countries where one would be surprised to find people interested in bluegrass, Americana, and the other folk genres Mac features.*

*As a prominent bluegrass internet radio broadcaster, what advice does Mac have for record labels who want to have their music heard? What's the number one thing record labels should do to get radio programmers – DJs and others who are the music gatekeepers – on their side?*

*"The best thing labels can do is sign artists that are marketable," she said. As a close number two, she said labels need to promote. And when they think they've promoted enough, they need to promote some more. "They really have to believe in the product they're producing," she said.*

*If a record label truly believes in its artist, it seems that's a surefire way to get Mac interested as well. As she in part walks in her father's footsteps, she's glad to help the great performers of bluegrass get their music heard.*

## **Bluegrass Ridge**

**Back in the day, the place to watch music videos was MTV,** a network providing a place for artists to air their concept videos instead of just performance clips. Those videos helped with the band's marketing efforts by giving fans a glimpse into the band's persona. Fans couldn't get enough of Pat Benatar, Rod Stewart, Todd Rundgren, Styx, REO Speedwagon and The Who. People who loved the artists and wanted to listen to them loved watching their videos.



Country music jumped on board with CMT and soon fans were watching their favorite country music artists from the comfort of their living rooms. Videos became a proven value and found a niche for both artists and viewers.

**And while MTV, CMT and GAC did well with videos,**

today they don't run them much like they did in the past. Now there's Bluegrass Ridge TV, the show that celebrates all things bluegrass. Jeff Mosely, president of CJM Productions out of Nashville, started the show in the early 2000s. "God guided me through the process," says Mosely. "I started with country music, then Gospel, then classic country and

*bluegrass videos. I realized there weren't many outlets for bluegrass artists to air their videos."*

*At one time Mosely owned a large production studio in the Nashville area, and the shows he created were taped in there. "It was a big operation, but times have changed," says Mosely, who explains that at one time he spent \$350 a week to ship tapes to overseas markets. "Now they are delivered via the internet! We send five shows a week to New Zealand and Australia for free. Isn't technology great?"*

***As with most great things, Bluegrass Ridge has evolved since its start.***

*Once hosted by different artists each week, the weekly half-hour program is now permanently hosted by the dynamic and award-winning bluegrass duo Nu-Blu. The husband-and-wife duo of Daniel and Carolyn Routh, who hail from Silver City, North Carolina, are the heart and soul of Nu-Blu and they are naturals at hosting a television show. The first two episodes they hosted were shot on location at the Station Inn in Nashville. Fans were treated to a glimpse inside the duo's life and music, getting to know them on a more personal level. "We are extremely excited about Daniel and Carolyn as the permanent hosts of Bluegrass Ridge," says Mosely, who serves as the show's executive producer. "They had guest-hosted a few times and our viewers loved them. They are such a down-to-earth couple. It was a no-brainer to hire them as the permanent host."*

*Mosely feels that Nu-Blu's love and passion for bluegrass music elevates the show to another level. "Our tradition of bringing great bluegrass music videos and artist interviews to our viewers remains the same," says Mosely. This love and passion, as well as the duo's relationship with fellow bluegrass artists brings an insider-depth to the show." Daniel says he looks forward to making more and stronger friendships with the artists he and Carolyn interview.*

**The show's home base is Parlor Recording studio on Music Row in Nashville.**

*"It showcases the studio, explains Mosely, "while giving viewers a glimpse into a real recording studio, a place where most of them would not normally have a chance to see, which brings a higher level of excitement to the show than it would have were it set in a TV studio. We bring artists into the conference room for interviews." Daniel and Carolyn will also interview artists on the road as they travel to festivals and concerts with their own act. "Daniel is so multi-faceted," Mosley says. "He is a great marketing guy, and he's added a strong social media component that has taken Bluegrass Ridge to a higher level."*

*The weekly half-hour program is jam-packed with music videos by some of today's bluegrass music's biggest acts, including The Grascals, Dailey and Vincent, the Roys, Rhonda Vincent, Ricky Skaggs and more. But what makes the show so special is the behind-the-scenes views of making the music videos and the artist interviews. The show allows viewers to get a rare first-hand look at the bluegrass genre that keeps getting hotter.*

*"We reach viewers in sixteen million homes in the United States, as well as in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and in the Cayman Islands," explains Mosley. The show can be accessed via Roku on Heartland TV, on The Family Channel, Keep It Country, AMG TV (northeast United States), and also on Keep It Country in the U.K., Cayman 27 and Country TV in the Cayman Islands.*

*The recording studio setting means Mosely no longer needs a large television studio, and the show's shooters and editors all work independently, which eliminates the need for a large staff. "The great thing about TV is that it's not going*

*away,” says Mosely. “The way we create content is changing, and the way people watch it is changing. We are proud to deliver quality content for viewers to enjoy.”*

***Check out Bluegrass Ridge on Heartland TV***

*<http://www.watchheartlandtv.com/>*

***Check out Nu-Blu:***

*<http://www.nu-blu.com/>*