



Last spring I was writing this column in San Miguel de Allende, wearing a great t-shirt sporting an exotic picture of Patricia Vonne. This year I am heading to San Miguel de Allende for the literary conference where Stephanie Urbina Jones will lead a songwriting workshop and open for Judy Collins. My second book, **Women In Texas Music**, has an interview with Stephanie, and the third book, still a manuscript, has an interview with Patricia Vonne. Just sayin' "Everything Connects." Now I want to tell you a little about Lee Ann Womack, who is in Kerrville on March 4 singing at the Robert Earl Keen (a chapter in my first book on Texas songwriters) at the annual fundraiser for the Hill Country Youth Orchestra. My foundation, Texas Heritage Music Foundation, celebrates 30 years in 2017, and we need such an angel for our educational programs.



I first heard Lee Ann sing with Willie Nelson at the Verizon Theatre. The magic was in the air. Her roots are in East Texas, but her music life is based in Nashville. We talked by phone in 2004, and she shared stories of her heroes, her family, her goals. "I've always said that I got my work ethic from all the women in my family. My mom has a master's degree in education. She did that with two kids, going to school at night. I watched her make it work. I learned how to do that. Now I have to do my

career, take care of my kids, and figure out how to make it all work. My mom's mother has her master's in education as well as my great-grandmother. That's a lot of hard work. My sister went on to become a lawyer. I watched all the women in my family work really hard and balance their family life with their careers. My mom's sister, my aunt, has also taught me a lot. My mom always told me I could do anything I wanted to do and be anyone I wanted to be. She made me believe it. She never pushed me. I never had a stage mom; I had a mom who gave me the tools then encouraged me to go work hard for what I wanted."

I had to agree with this as I thought about Annabel Lee McClary Pillow, my mother. She was a voice for my success, a voice of ongoing encouragement in my life. My second book, an oral history on the women in Texas music, is a collection of interviews on writing, family, performing, balancing and creating. I re-read from time to time as the encouragement I need.

We talked about her Texas roots: "I've always said that country is not something you put on and take off. It's inside you. I know when the Dixie Chicks came out, they had to face those comments: 'They're not country. They're wearing Marc Jacobs or something.' I just remember thinking how ludicrous that comment was. You can't get any more country than they are. It doesn't matter what kind of shoes are on their feet."

And we talked about reading: "I read many different kinds of books.... I'm in the middle of about five different ones right now. I went through a period of time where I read a lot of Larry McMurtry books. I love that. I love Cormac McCarthy." And I remember back to my conversation with Robert Earl Keen, and he was reading Cormac. Now the two will play in Kerrville on March 4. Just something an English teacher would notice.

I will keep featuring the women I have interviewed in this column, and you can also expect some new voices. Seems Kathy Bauer will be working with my foundation more, and we have started visiting. Time for a complete list here. I know the first was Lisa Beck as she and Art Crawford started their marriage. My time is flying.

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