The Sally Mountain Show

It’s a Family Affair

By Janine Shriver and Jennie Higgins

In rural America music was a family, church and community affair. Little other entertainment was available in those areas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Musical instruments were often played by even the very young. It was not unusual to find all members of a family proficient string players and singers. String bands, square dances and folk music interchanges were part of their daily lives.

As was in these earlier times, a local family carries on this tradition today. The Vincent family, better known as The Sally Mountain Show, reside in Greentop, Mo. The family has five members, all of whom participate in the band. “The family was always playing, Dad’s-Dad’s-Dad; it was handed down from several generations,” Rhonda Vincent said.

Johnny Vincent, the father, plays the banjo, along with other instruments. He sings lead and harmony. Carolyn, the mother, plays dog-house bass fiddle, and also sings harmony and lead. Rhonda, their 19-year old daughter, plays mandolin, fiddle, bass fiddle, guitar and dobro (forerunner of the electric guitar). Rhonda sings lead and harmony, and also composes some of their songs. Darren, 11, the oldest son, plays guitar, fiddle, mandolin, bass fiddle or whatever he decides to pick up. He sings lead and harmony. Brian, the youngest of the Vincents, is seven years old. He sings and is learning the mandolin and fiddle.

Where does the name Sally Mountain come from? Johnny explained, “That originated from where we was all raised, over in Putnam County, not too far from Unionville. There’s a hill over there called Sally Mountain and Lickskillet was down at the bottom of Sally Mountain. Lickskillet was an old mining town and several years back there was a lady that lived on this hill whose name was Sally Mosely. She was an old-time fiddler, and she kinda had a get-together occasionally, and had a little moonshine. She kinda run a badhouse. It was a no-no to the community but they called that Sally’s Mountain.”

Some people think of country music and bluegrass music as the same thing. What is the difference between country and bluegrass music? Rhonda replied, “Country is electric and bluegrass is all acoustic. There are no electric instruments in pure bluegrass music.” The Sally Mountain Show is not

THE SALLY MOUNTAIN SHOW—Based out of Green City, Mo., the Johnny Vincent family is preserving the tradition of family-oriented entertainment. The whole family gets into the bluegrass and country act; pictured are Johnny, Brian, Darren, Rhonda and Carolyn Vincent.
strictly bluegrass. "We do more or less country songs," said Rhonda, "Now the real pure bluegrass we don't do." Everything might be called bluegrass, but it's not hard-core bluegrass, it's acoustical country music."

Rhonda explained that hard-core bluegrass is, "your typical old bluegrass numbers, like Bill Monroe came up with several years ago. Bill Monroe is the daddy of bluegrass music, songs like 'Foggy Mountain Breakdown.'"

Some of the most frequent opportunities for the Vincents to play before an audience are weekend bluegrass festivals around the Midwest. Festivals consist of more than listening to bluegrass or country bands; they are more like mini-conventions of musicians and bluegrass lovers, drawn from all directions. It is good, wholesome family entertainment.

Organizations such as SPBGMA, the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America, sponsor the events, which are usually held outdoors throughout the spring, summer and fall months. SPBGMA was founded in 1974 by Chuck Stearns, a musician from Kirksville, Mo., who was concerned that bluegrass music might become a thing of the past. Smaller organizations have formed as associate groups to SPBGMA, as well as many Midwest clubs which operate independently of the larger organization. SPBGMA is concerned primarily with preserving bluegrass in its pure, traditional form, so only acoustic instruments are allowed on stage; no band may use an electrical instrument at a SPBGMA-sponsored festival.

Bluegrass festivals usually last three or four nights; groups perform Friday, Saturday and Sunday. "You get there and you play. It's pretty informal," Rhonda said. "Saturdays, sometimes we have workshops in the morning. In that case, we could get up early; otherwise, we would sleep in. That afternoon the shows usually start at 1 p.m. and last until 5 p.m., and your group will play somewhere in there. Then, some stay up all night and pick around the fire. There are people from everywhere. Saturday night you want to stay up all night, because you know you're going to have to leave the next day."

The days get shorter and the nights get longer as the Vincents drive the many miles they have to travel during the summer months. Their schedule is not one you could call relaxing. The Sally Mountain Show has performed in several parts of the United States. The family lived in Texas in 1974, performing at an amusement park and country music show. In the past five years they have played in Missouri, Florida, Georgia, Arkansas and Oklahoma. They worked at Silver Dollar City in Branson, Mo., during the summer months of 1977-78. Presently, the Vincents are playing at many bluegrass festivals, churches and shows.

The family has won many awards in the past. Among them are the SPBGMA Award for Best Female Vocalist-Traditional, which Rhonda won in 1980 and 1981.

Their latest album, "The Sun's Coming Up," was recorded in Nashville, Tenn. This was their fifth recording effort, but their first album released through their recording contract with Stardust and Wizard Recording Company. They are now completing their sixth album, an all-gospel record which they hope will be released in late October.
By Kevin Menz

The evening of April 27, 1899, tragedy struck Kirksville. A fierce cyclone ripped through the southwest corner of town through the present campus of Northeast Missouri State University and exited over Kellwood Hills. The cyclone unleashed its fury, coming to a standstill at several points.

The funnel-shaped monster appeared in the sky southwest of town about 6:15 in the evening. The funnel dipped down about a mile west of the Normal school campus and ripped its way in a northeasterly path until it reached Jefferson Street. It veered slightly to the north and worked its way between McPherson and Washington Streets until it reached Baltimore, and passed out of town over Kellwood Hills. The fury of the storm left a path 600 feet wide with 40 homes destroyed and many more damaged. More than 30 people were killed and 179 were injured.

This cyclone was not an average twister. Some eyewitnesses claimed to have seen a complete house intact hundreds of feet in the air before it exploded into fragments. Another victim was the only witness to a freak incident; a woman claimed to have been picked up by the twister and carried above the trees before she finally came to rest in a mud pool. It was also reported that a Kirkville resident found parts of his belongings 95 miles away near Batavia, Iowa.

The railroads ran excursion trips to Kirkville following the storm and brought thousands of sightseers to the disaster-stricken area. Relief came from all directions, from as far away as Minnesota and Pennsylvania.

The devastating cyclone of 1899 resulted in a 600-foot wide path of destruction, leaving 30 people dead and 179 injured. The photos above show what little was left of the W. D. Howell residence in Kirkville. The photo on the right is a typical scene taken after the disaster. The event was chronicled by Edward Kloepfer in his waltz, "Just as the Clouds Passed O'er," published by Charles H. Harrington of Kirkville. The music, shown on the opposite page, is published here courtesy of Dr. and Mrs. Roger Cody.
A BEAUTIFUL WALTZ SONG

JUST AS THE CLOUDS PASSED O'ER

Words & Music by EDWARD KLOEPFER
CHAS M HARRINGTON
KIRKSVILLE MO.

JUST AS THE CLOUD PASSED O'ER.

Words and Music by EDWARD KLOEPFER.

As the shades of eve were closing o'er the city of Kirksville,
its
dear old church, for her shining lily that night. Its
quiet lay, gay people never thought of coming ill,
but
upper stories, reading and the house cheer and bright. Its

just when all seemed most serene, so warning of a hour,
there
home was in the suburbs, and to fear he reached the gate. The
building, death and destruction where ever it may strike;
and
many homes were swept away, none saw the like before;
where

come upon this city that twisting, whirling storm
deadly eyes there did its work, and his soul met his fate.

CHORUS.
When Waltz Tempo.

A epistle is a terror to man and beast alike.