

The Kingston Trio History

In 1957 America was ready for a new style of music. Just out of college, Bob Shane, Nick Reynolds and Dave Guard took dormant folk music and gave it a comic twist irresistible to the college crowd (and just about everyone else). The music was rooted in American Popular culture, but performed with a refreshing style that now seems timeless. Like the Beatles, The Kingston Trio created a national audience for their new style of music, causing a ripple effect on the entire music industry. When Tom Dooley went gold in 1958, the folk revival was born. In no time The Limelites, The Brothers Four, Chad Mitchell and The Smothers Bros. all found an audience. It was this "folk revival" that set the stage for Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Peter Paul & Mary, The Byrds, and the protest movement of the 60s.

The then unknown Trio was playing at the Cracked Pot in the spring of '57. In the audience was Frank Werber, a young publicist who was making a name for himself in the San Francisco nightclub scene. Werber was captivated by the spontaneity of their performance, and approached the band as they were packing their instruments after the show. They talked into the morning, and by the time the bartender was ready to lock up, The Trio had a manager, a contract (signed on a paper napkin!) and a name, The Kingston Trio, chosen for its Ivy League/Calypso crossover appeal.

The band worked tirelessly to refine the music and polish their act. Werber arranged for them to work with Judy Davis, San Francisco's finest voice coach. After months of work, they were booked at the Purple Onion, San Francisco's "discovery club". They were an overnight sensation. A one week booking turned into a sold out run that lasted for months. Established entertainers such as Mort Sahl caught their show, and word began to spread throughout the show business world. The first KT tour took them from casinos in Reno to the nation's premier nightclubs, such as New York's Village Vanguard & Blue Angel, and Chicago's Mr. Kelley's.

In the Summer of '58, The Kingston Trio returned to San Francisco, playing a four month standing room only run at the famous Hungry i nightclub. During this period the group also recorded their first album, which enjoyed mild success. That Fall, The Trio went to Honolulu to play at The Royal Hawaiian. It gave Dave and Bob some time at home, unaware of what was happening on the mainland. Bill Terry and Paul Colburn, DJs at KLUB in Salt Lake City, took a liking to one of the songs on the first KT album and gave it heavy airplay. Other stations across the country picked the song up and clamored for Capitol Records to release it as a single. Capitol's vice president, Voyle Gilmore, called Frank Werber in Hawaii. "Get those boys back here" he said, "It looks like you're going to have the record of the year."

Gillmore's prediction was no exaggeration. The song was TOM DOOLEY, and this was the beginning of a meteoric success that has become a show business legend. When the Trio

returned from Hawaii, *Tom Dooley* was the number one song in the nation. Milton Berle, Perry Como, Dinah Shore & Patti Page all signed the Trio to appear on their shows. The Trio also remained loyal to their college audience, playing college shows every other day over the next six months. In those first four whirlwind years with Dave Guard, the Trio cut ten albums. The Dec. 12 issue of Billboard magazine listed four Trio albums among the top 10, a feat unsurpassed to this day. Voyle Gilmore of Captiol records produced the group's top records. A gifted producer, his stellar work with The Kingston Trio & Frank Sinatra is still enjoyed by millions of music lovers.

In 1961 Dave Guard left The Kingston Trio to pursue a different musical direction. Several musicians were given serious consideration to fill the opening, including Roger McGuinn of Byrds fame. Nick and Bob agreed on John Stewart as the new member. "John was a natural" according to Nick. Bob said John gave the group "that extra solid sound" they had been looking for. John truly was the right fit. A first rate entertainer & gifted songwriter, he also had the good fortune to look great in a striped shirt. Anxiety at Capitol over the future of their best selling act quickly vanished when a group of label execs heard the band play their newest song, *Jesse James*, at Frank Werber's house.

The Trio enjoyed six productive years with John Stewart. Although the flavor of the sound evolved, it remained as infectious as ever with the fans. The national and worldwide acclaim continued, and thirteen more albums were released. Many singles made the charts and several received Grammy nominations. Among the memorable albums were: *Close Up*, *College Concert*, *Something Special*, *Back In Town*, *#16* and *New Frontier*. In 1967 Nick, Bob and John disbanded the Trio to pursue individual careers. "Pop music tastes were changing" says Bob. "That whole rock revolution spread from San Francisco across the country and took a lot of our audience with it. But you know folk music is timeless, and I knew it would come around again."

Bob recorded four singles for Decca, including Rod McKuen's *Simple Gifts* & Bobby Russell's *Honey*. Although *Honey* sold like hot cakes in two test markets, Decca failed to promote the record, and Bob declined to record Russell's *Little Green Apples*. Both songs, of course, ultimately sold millions for Bobby Goldsboro. John went on to record with Buffy Ford on Capitol, and continued to write; his *Daydream Believer* was a million seller for the Monkees. He and Buffy also campaigned vigorously for Robert Kennedy. Nick hung up his guitar for a time and took up auto racing. In 1967 he moved with his family to Oregon, where he ranched, antiques and pursued other diversions.

By 1968, Bob was eager to perform with a trio again. The New Kingston Trio featured Pat Horine and banjoist Jim Conner, accompanied by bassist Frank Passantino and drummer Frank Sanchez. The New Kingston Trio enjoyed renewed success, recording two albums, and adding new material to the KT repertoire. In 1973 Bob teamed up with Bill Zorn, formerly of The New Christy Minstrels, and North Carolinian Roger Gambill. Roger brought vocal talents to the group ranging from pop to operatic. His rendition of *Danny Boy* was never recorded, but got to be a regular request from the fans. In 1976 Bob & Roger teamed with

George Grove, another North Carolinian who had written and performed in Nashville. George's vocal and instrumental talents are unsurpassed in the Trio's history, and it should be noted that the symphony shows - of which they perform many each year - are made possible by his orchestral arrangements.

For Trio fans, March of 1982 brought a magical television event when PBS broadcast "The Kingston Trio and Friends Reunion." Bob, Nick and Dave performed for the first time since 1961; Bob, Nick and John for the first time since 1967. Every member who had ever performed as part of The Kingston Trio appeared that night. Surely this was one of the most notable shows in Kingston history. Tommy Smothers hosted, while each former Trio member performed a memorable sampling. Although the Kingstons had played to many sold out stadiums, this was different. People had traveled from all over the country, and much of the "who's who" of the music industry attended. Each generation of the Trio performed that night - to deafening applause. Long time Trio fanatic Lindsay Buckingham of Fleetwood Mac played bass. Mary Travers graced the show by singing *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*... it was truly a pinnacle night for Kingston fans.

Shortly after this phenomenal event, Bob, Roger & George recorded *25 Years Non-Stop*, faithfully reproducing the Trio's biggest hits over the years. It was followed in January of 1983 by *Looking For The Sunshine*, a collection of new songs. The Trio was maintaining a busy concert schedule when suddenly in 1985 Roger died of a heart attack. Roger was a superb musician and outstanding humorist... his shoes would be hard to fill.

Enter Bob Haworth, a musician who had cut his musical teeth on Kingston material. Bob was with the Brothers Four & managed to fill in so that neither group missed any dates. Bob remained with the Trio for three years, then left to pursue his solo career. At this point, it seemed natural for the Trio to turn to the man who had helped forge the original, compelling Kingston sound more than thirty years earlier - Nick Reynolds. "It took me about 15 minutes to feel comfortable singing with the Trio again", commented Reynolds. The Shane, Reynolds & Grove Trio enjoyed many years of sold out shows.

The close of the Twentieth Century saw change come again to the Kingston Trio, as Bobby Haworth returned following Nick's second retirement. Nick's last show with the Trio was performed December 2, 1999 in Scottsdale, Az. The Kingston Trio now consists of Bob Shane, George Grove and Bobby Haworth, and is still playing to sold out audiences and garnering rave reviews wherever they go.

The Kingston Trio

THE ORIGINAL SOUND IS BACK!

More than three decades after *Tom Dooley* changed American popular music forever, the original Kingston Trio sound is back with Bob Shane, Nick Reynolds, and George Grove.

“With Nick rejoining the group, we now have the nucleus of the original Kingston Trio sound,” says Bob Shane, the Trio’s long-time leader and one of the original founding members. “It was always Nick and I that really defined the Kingston Trio sound, with me singing lead and Nick harmonizing. So this Trio, with George, Nick, and myself, sounds very much like the original group with one major difference--this one sounds better!”

The original Kingston Trio was formed in 1957 by Bob Shane, Nick Reynolds, and Dave Guard while the three were attending college in the San Francisco area. Using only acoustic guitars and banjos, singing simple yet memorable melodies, they revolutionized popular music, reawakening America to its own rich folk music heritage. The release of *Tom Dooley* in October of 1958 began the “folk music revival” and set the stage for Dylan, Baez, Peter-Paul & Mary and the entire protest music movement of the 60's. The Kingston Trio was the number one vocal group in the world, a musical and cultural phenomenon whose record sales and concert draws were matched only by The Beatles.

In 1961, after two Grammy Awards and numerous gold records, Dave Guard left the group and John Stewart was introduced, maintaining the Trio for another six years. In 1967, Bob, Nick and John disbanded the Trio to pursue individual careers. “Pop music tastes were changing again,” says Shane; “that whole ‘rock revolution’ thing spread from San Francisco across the country, and took a lot of our audience with it. But you know, folk is timeless, and I knew it would come around again.”

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Bob was right, and in 1972 The Kingston Trio reformed with George Grove and Roger Gambill. They discarded songs they did not like, and kept the rest and added some new material. For the next decade, the Trio again traveled the world playing to sold out audiences, and recording for the Nautilus and Xeres labels.

In 1985, The Kingston Trio line-up changed again following the untimely death of Roger Gambill. “We were devastated by the loss of Roger,” says George Grove, “but The Kingston Trio as a group is a musical institution that had to go on, just as it has for 30 years. Having Nick Reynolds back in the Trio brings it back full circle, which just shows you the power and longevity of our kind of music.”

Indeed. The Kingston Trio’s trademark three-part harmony and clean, crisp sound keeps them touring 35 weeks a year, and George Grove has arranged and scored their music for symphony, enabling them to play approximately 20 major symphony concerts a year. What’s more, they are attracting an ever increasing number of new fans, both young and old.

As Bob Shane put it in a recent issue of *Frets* magazine, “There is a tremendous demand for our type of acoustic music, and not just from those who remember The Kingston Trio. With more story songs, I think we could attract listeners even among very young children.”

“All the people want is for us to sing a song, tell a story, and make it good.”

They have been doing just that since 1957.

BIOGRAPHIES

BOB SHANE

I was born in Hawaii on Feb. 1, 1934. My father was a successful wholesale distributor of toys and sporting goods who planned that I would eventually take over the family business. So even though I sang in the Glee Club & appeared in several school plays and variety shows in high school, I pursued entertaining purely for fun. I was always on the beaches with a ukulele, learning songs of the Polynesian Islands from yachtsmen and my Hawaiian friends.

During those days I became acquainted with a serviceman from the mainland who shared my hobby of playing guitar and singing. We played at parties here and there, some of which we crashed. One night we met James Cagney, and he was quite taken

by our talent for entertaining. He told us we "ought to be in pictures" and said to call him if we ever came to Hollywood. I never took advantage of his offer, but my friend did... he later became TV star Roger Smith.

I attended Honolulu's Punahou School... the oldest private school west of the Rockies. It was there that I met Dave Guard. In our junior year we formed a group to sing in the junior carnival, performing songs by the Weavers, the most popular folk group of the time. After graduation, I went on to Menlo College in California and Dave went to Stanford, a few miles away. In my junior year, I met Nick Reynolds at Menlo. We formed a duet and sang at parties, school functions, and sometimes, "beer gardens." Occasionally, Dave joined us as a trio.

After college in 1956, I returned to Hawaii to work for my father and learn the family business. Still loving to entertain, I also at that time became the first-ever Elvis impersonator, actually billed as "Hawaii's Elvis". In 1956 Elvis was a definite influence, along with Hank Williams, Harry Belafonte, The Weavers and various other Hawaiian and calypso groups. I soon discovered that the family business wasn't for me and when Nick called a year later and asked to form a trio, I was ready. I had always enjoyed singing with Nick and Dave and that year-1957- The Kingston Trio was born.

I was married to Louise Brandon for 23 years, and have five wonderful children, Jody, Susan, Brandon, Robin and Jason, and three grandchildren, Victoria ("Tori"), Olivia Louise and Emma. For the past 40 years, I have worked and toured at least 28 weeks every year. I've been darn near everywhere in the U.S. and a lot of other places. I like to say, "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro." When not touring, I reside in Phoenix with my wife Bobbie, and spend my time relaxing, shooting skeet, antiquing (I love the Arts & Crafts and Art Deco periods) and hiking.

My condo in Phoenix is decorated with lots of art, gold records, Kingston Trio memorabilia, and even a Ms. Pac Man machine. I also collect Martin guitars, which I rotate on road tours. The thing I'm most proud of next to my kids, is that I have played live to over 10,000,000 people. I like to say I'm not a folksinger, I'm a folks singer.

Bob Haworth

I was born at a very early age in Spokane, WA on October 9, 1946. My family was musical: my father's Uncle Carl played plectrum banjo and sang in Bing Crosby's band in Spokane before Bing hit the big time. Carl also recorded for Columbia Records in the mid-1920's and had about three 78RPM releases under his name - Carl Haworth. His brother, Uncle Wayne, played tenor banjo and worked for several years playing on cruise ships to the Orient in the 1920's.

I took piano lessons for a while in grade school, but was intent on learning to play the banjo and guitar. I studied with Dutch Groshoff in Spokane from the time I was about 9

until my family moved to Medford, Oregon in 1959. (An interesting side-note: one of Dutch's other students was Mark Pearson - see below ref: The Brothers Four.) During Junior High and High School in Medford I excelled in music, starring in school musical productions, singing in choir and playing bass fiddle in the orchestra. My buddy, John Eads, and I formed a folk-singing duo called "The Kinsmen" and we were the hit of the town, skipping school regularly to sing for Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions Club meetings, as well as various school functions. We also won a national talent search hosted by Will Rodgers, Jr.

Basically we aped The Kingston Trio, The Limelickers, Peter, Paul and Mary and various other "folk" legends of the time. After graduating from Medford High School in 1965, I attended UCLA, majoring in music composition. I sang in the UCLA choir under the direction of Roger Wagner. To help pay tuition I played banjo at area pizza parlors on weekends. I also did occasional studio work, playing banjo and guitar for movie scores and other projects. In 1968 I transferred to the University of Oregon to major in music education. During this time I performed as a solo act in various venues around the Eugene, Oregon area. In 1969 I dropped out of school and joined "The New Yorkers," a bubble-gum band based in Portland, OR. We were a regional phenomenon with several local hits on the Jerden label. We later signed with Decca and the group changed their name to "The Hudson Brothers," which was the real name of the other three members in the group. After receiving the revelation that I was just a sideman for Bill, Mark and Brett Hudson, I left the group prior to their flash in the pan as a Saturday morning kiddy phenomenon.

I went back to performing as a solo artist around the Pacific Northwest. Through my affiliation with The Hudson Brothers I was associated with a Seattle record mogul named Jerry Dennon (Jerden Records). He was a business partner of The Brothers Four (they co-owned a radio station in Seaside, OR). I did some studio work for Jerry from time to time and at one point he called and asked if I was interested in auditioning for The Brothers Four. I passed the audition and joined the group, replacing Mark Pearson, who had replaced original member Mike Kirkland, the previous year. (Another interesting side-note: the group also auditioned John Denver for the part, but he turned it down). I sang with The Brothers Four from 1970 to 1985, recording over a dozen albums and touring internationally. In 1972, my son Graham was born. He is now going on 28 and touring internationally as the drummer for his band, "The LaDonnas."

During the '70's and '80's, when The Brothers Four were not performing, I worked around the Seattle area in a duo called "Bo Mooney" with my partner, Gary Ballard. I developed a one-man band around the name, Bo Mooney, with Gary as a sideman. I played guitar and banjo as well as harmonica, foot-pedal bass with my right foot, various percussion instruments with my left foot and anything else that was readily available. This evolved into a mobile one-man band with a bass drum on my back, banjo, harmonicas, bells and whistles and cymbals between my knees. (I still perform with this rig when I'm not touring with the Trio).

Also during the '70's and '80's I started Crescent Entertainment, booking bands and managing a few acts. One of these was "The New Deal Rhythm Band," a campy swing

band featuring singer Cheryl Bentyne. Cheryl later left the group to sing with the "The Manhattan Transfer." I also recorded two albums of banjo music for Jerry Dennon's production companies. Some of the cuts I recorded ended up on a compilation album of banjo music that included Earl Scruggs, among other banjo greats. In 1985, Bob Shane (whom I'd met many years previously through The Brothers Four) called to ask me to fill in for Roger Gambill, who had been hospitalized. Bob and George came to my home on Vashon Island in Puget Sound and we rehearsed for about an hour. The next day I performed my first concert with the group in Southern California. The next day I sang in Seattle with The Brothers Four and then the following day I was back with the Trio again. I was only intending to fill in until Roger recovered, but he died and I was stuck with the gig.

I sang with the Trio from 1985 until 1988, when Nick Reynolds returned to the group. In 1987, I met my lovely wife, Meri, at a concert in Lakewood, Colorado. We saw each other off and on for the next year, and then in 1988, I moved to Colorado to live with her. We were married on Sept. 6, 1990, and we're living happily ever-after. Between 1988 and 1999, I performed as a solo and occasionally with my band around Colorado. I was also available on several occasions to fill in for Nick Reynolds when he was unable to perform with The Kingston Trio. I recorded a solo album of original music in 1993 and continue to write music on a regular basis. I have also taken an active role in my wife's businesses, which include a printing and photo copy shop, a packaging and shipping store and a plantation shutter company.

I also continue to operate Crescent Entertainment, booking national acts and regional entertainers throughout the area. In May of 1999, Bob Shane called to say that Nick would be retiring later in the year and was drastically curtailing his performance schedule with the group. I performed regularly with The Trio during the summer and fall of 1999 until Nick retired officially in December. I am now back with the group full time. In addition to my strong vocal abilities - I sing tenor in the group - I also play many instruments, including: guitar (electric and acoustic), banjo (plectrum, tenor and 5-string), bass (up-right and electric), mandolin, tuba, harmonica, keyboards, mandolin, autoharp, percussion and musical saw. I'm featured in the Trio's shows with my saw, an old Disston hand saw that I inherited from my Great-Grandfather. Although this instrument has never been part of The Kingston Trio's line-up before, it seems to generate a lot of interest from the audiences.

I consider myself the luckiest guy in the world to be part of this group. I know there are thousands of people who have emulated the Trio and know all the songs, but I just happened to be the one who got the job. I consider it my duty to carry on this great American tradition by bringing enjoyment to the many Trio fans that still enjoy this wonderful music.

GEORGE GROVE

I was born on October 9, 1947 in Hickory NC to George Sr. and Retta. As a newborn, I was short and bald, and I have managed to remain true to that ideal, altering my personage only by the addition of a perfectly coifed beard, a paradigm shift in philosophy after two divorces, a successful career as a banjo player (heretofore mutually exclusive concepts: "success" and "banjo"), and a fabric of life with The Kingston Trio woven throughout.

When I was nine years old, my sister Joanie brought home a record which I immediately appropriated as my own; Live at the Hungry i. I was instantly swept up in Triomania, teaching myself the exact parts vocally and instrumentally of every song the Trio recorded. I formed folk groups in high school & college, was drafted into the army after matriculation from Wake Forest University, and played trumpet and piano in the Army band. After spending several years in Nashville playing at Opryland and doing studio work, I answered the call of the wild (Bob) to audition for the Trio. Two weeks later, around the end of October 1976, I joined the group in Chicago and the rest, as they say, is a resume.

In May of 1983 The Kingston Trio performed in New York City at Carnegie Hall. This stands out as one of my proudest moments with the Trio since Carnegie is the ultimate performance venue in the U.S. As a child I had heard of all the great pianists having given their preeminent performances in Carnegie Hall, and I wanted to be one of them. On this date, with The Kingston Trio, I was to have my opportunity. When performance time came, I walked out on to a stage that had held the greatest talents in the world, hearing the creaking floorboards that had also creaked under their feet. As I was introduced by Bob to sing my solo, from the box seats in the back of the hall I heard my Mom's voice, "That's my boy!!" In a split second there flashed all of the hours that she had sat listening to me practice piano, guitar and banjo, and all was right with the world.

My life was a bachelor's dream in Southern California from '88-'96. But in 1996 I moved to Las Vegas to share my life with Cindy, a career schoolteacher whose abilities to encourage children to do their best is exceeded only by her education, her honest Midwestern values and her extraordinary patience with my itinerant lifestyle. With her encouragement I finally crawled out of my banjo case, went back to graduate school (at UNLV), and earned a Master of Music degree in jazz composition, graduating in December, 2001.

I am now working on my 28th year with The Kingston Trio, longer than any other member with the exception of Bob Shane. I have spent these years on the road because of my love of performance, my respect for the music and my admiration of the group that fomented it. Personally, the Trio has seen me throughout an enormous amount of growth. Professionally, it has permitted me to become involved and stay involved with music and musicians of considerable ability. For me, the singing of Tom Dooley every night is not just the repetition of a song, but a devotion to a concept known as The Kingston Trio.

