

EXHIBITIONS



Not Just the Blues...

REMEMBERING ROBERT JR.

Roy Book Binder,
Bob Corritore, Jorma
Kaukonen, John Mayall,
Jack Randall, Tommy
McCoy and Anthony
Sapienza pay tribute
to the blues master,
Robert Jr. Lockwood.

Robert Jr. Lockwood: A Tribute 1915 – 2006

BOB CORRITORE:

I first met Robert Lockwood Jr. in 1977 while he was playing a two night gig at the Paradise Club in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I am a Chicago boy but I was going to college at Tulsa University and I was already a big fan of Robert through his records both as a leader and as a sideman with Little Walter and Sonny Boy Williamson. I came to him as an adoring fan and we immediately established the roles we would have for the next 29 years: I the student and he the teacher. I sat with Robert every break and he invited me to play with his band for parts of both nights. I would not see him again until 1979 in Chicago when he just happened to

a high starting point as a record producer. It also was the last time that these Little Walter alumni would reunite to play in that classic Little Walter style on a record. The CD was released on my fledgling Blues Over Blues Record label as it's first release and was met with great fan-fare. I do not think it would have been recognized nearly as much without Robert Jr. on it even though Little Willie Anderson is a powerful artist of his own merit. This album is currently available on Earwig Music.

After that I would see Robert periodically when he would come to visit Chicago. It seemed like he would stop in every summer to see his longtime friend

trip Robert was reunited with his brother Sylvester Shannon who lived in Phoenix. Robert and Sylvester had not seen in each other in years. He brought his wife Annie with him also and from that point forward I was a friend of the family.

In 1991 I opened a night club called the Rhythm Room and was able to bring Robert out 3 more times. The first time Robert came out he brought Gene Schwartz and Robert "Red Top" Young and I filled in the lineup with drummer Chico Chism. Then in 2000 we had him out for a show in which he did a solo set and then Joined Henry Gray and Chico Chism for a beautiful set. During that trip I also recorded Robert again in a session with Henry Gray, Chico Chism, Mario Moreno (on bass), Johnny Rapp on second guitar and myself on harmonica. Though Robert was best known at this point for playing 12-string electric guitar we had him play 6 string on this session to recapture the older sound. Robert sang two numbers on this session including a gorgeous version of "That's Alright" which Robert claims to have written and given to Jimmy Rogers. Then Henry Gray sang about 10 songs. None of this session has been issued yet but it does exist and there are some great performances. I would later play him the mixed version of his "That's Alright" in my car and he was very happy with it saying "Ain't nothin' wrong with that!". I felt very proud.

In 2003 on Robert's last trip to the Rhythm Room we did a live recording session which would later become "The Legend Live" CD which featured Robert performing brilliantly in a solo performance on electric 12-string guitar. Robert had a list of songs he had chosen to record which he ran by me for approval. I was so touched by how hard he worked and how serious he was about making a great record. He flew in the day before and asked me to bring over a practice amp for him in his hotel

Robert asked me "How Much You Sellin' My CD For?"
and when I told him I was selling it for \$15 he boasted
that he was selling it for \$20 proclaiming
"It's a good record".

be in town during the same time period as I was recording Little Willie Anderson. He was in town coincidentally for the funeral of Lee Jackson. I called him at Sunnyland Slim's house where he was staying and I was delighted that he would agree to be part of this project. Little Willie was a harmonica player deep in the Little Walter mold and Robert's participation completed an already great lineup that also included Sammy Lawhorn, Jimmy Lee Robinson, Willie Black and Fred Below on drums. All of a sudden at age 22 here I am producing my very first record with the best of the best. Robert Jr. added a simply magical touch to the record as he must of done regularly for Chess Records during that label's heyday. When I think about this session I now realize that it was to become a cornerstone of my life as it set

Sunnyland Slim. They would usually do a guest appearance at B.L.U.E.S. on Halsted. During one of those visits I called for Robert over at Sunnyland's house and he invited me over. Hubert Sumlin was living with Sunnyland at the time. Fred Below and Little Willie Anderson stopped on by also. I had a wonderful time just hearing these guys talk of their great experiences. I felt really blessed to be there.

In 1981 I would move from Chicago to Phoenix and in 1984 I set up a gig for Robert Jr. at the L.P. Club and we did two shows. Robert started the show solo and then my group at the time (The Mojomatics) would back Robert up. During that trip we went in the studio and recorded "Naptown Blues" which appeared on my All-Star Blues Sessions record. Again Robert graciously allowed me into his greatness. During this

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room. When he was finished at the end of the night he had given his all. The next day we recorded a brief interview at KJZZ (the radio station that I host a blues show on) and he performed a medley of Dust My Broom / Ramblin' On My Mind which I released on the "Blues On My Radio" compilation.

During all these years I would run into Robert Jr. frequently at out of town events such as the Chicago Blues Festival, the Handy Awards and always at the King Biscuit Blues Festival. We would speak by phone periodically also. In a phone call about a year ago while we were talking about "The Legend Live" Robert asked me "How Much You Sellin' My CD For?" and when I told him I was selling it for \$15 he boasted that he was selling it for \$20 proclaiming "It's a good record". Again I felt proud. The last time I saw Robert was at the Arkansas Blues and Heritage festival (formerly called the King Biscuit Blues Festival) and we were able to sit together and visit for a good hour. I somehow knew that it might be our last time together.

I feel that my friendship and association with Robert Jr. Lockwood has been a true

blessing in my life. He allowed me into his greatness and he taught me by example. Though I am sorry to see him go I cannot think of a better lived life then the one he made for himself. He would not want us to be upset. I once called Robert Jr. to inform him that his long time friend Dave Myers had passed, and he could hear the sadness in my voice. He strongly reprimanded me for being upset, and said in his stern way: "That is just part of life and you have to accept that and move on". Robert Jr. leaves us with the strength and pride that he had every day of his life. We will all miss him, but his music and legend will live on forever.

—Bob Corritore

TOMMY MCCOY:

I grew up in North Eastern Ohio from 1954 into the late seventies. I started playing in and around the Cleveland area at a young age. Blues has always been my predominant influence and Robert Lockwood has been a mainstay in the Ohio Blues scene. I recently played in Cleveland at "Fat Fish Blue", Robert Lockwoods

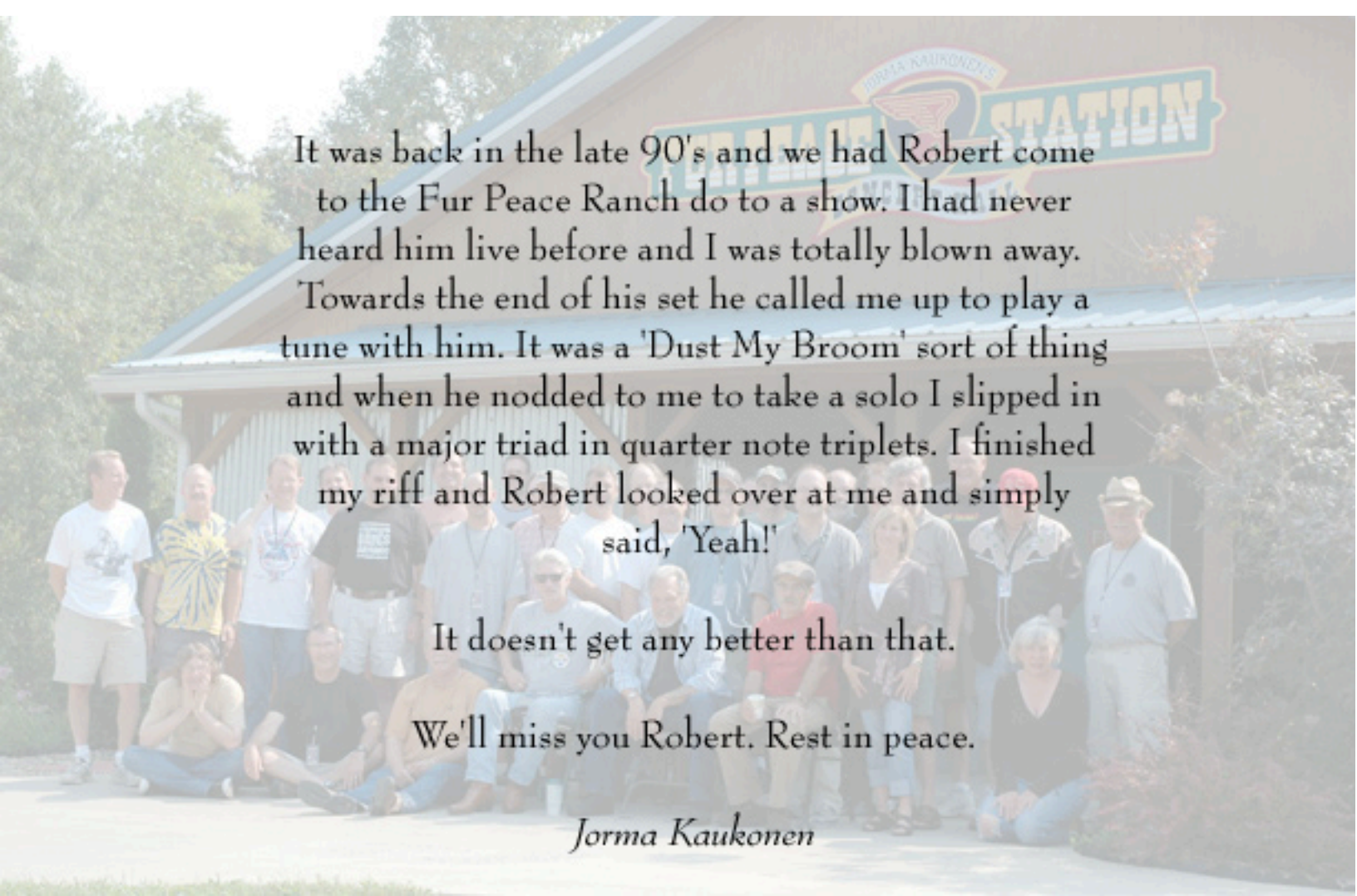
homebase. He was a very well respected forefather to the Blues and a huge influence and will be greatly missed.

—Tommy McCoy

From 1990-1996 Jack Randall was Robert Jr. Lockwood's agent. When he heard the news that we'd be doing a tribute, to Mr. Lockwood, he called us to share a couple of stories about the man he remembered so fondly.

JACK RANDALL:

In the early 90's Sony Records released *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings* in a double-boxed set and much to everyone's shock and surprise, it ended up going gold. So on the heels of that, we were getting a lot of requests for Robert Jr. Lockwood to play some of this music "acoustically" — which for Robert meant he would still play it on his twelve-string electric guitar but he would play it as a duo with his bass player Gene Schwartz. He would play some of his own songs but he would also play a lot of the Robert Johnson material as well because of his lineage to Johnson. In 1992



It was back in the late 90's and we had Robert come to the Fur Peace Ranch do to a show. I had never heard him live before and I was totally blown away. Towards the end of his set he called me up to play a tune with him. It was a 'Dust My Broom' sort of thing and when he nodded to me to take a solo I slipped in with a major triad in quarter note triplets. I finished my riff and Robert looked over at me and simply said, 'Yeah!'

It doesn't get any better than that.

We'll miss you Robert. Rest in peace.

Jorma Kaukonen



Robert Young, Chico Chism, Robert Lockwood, and Bob Corritore

or 1993, I received a fax from a company in Japan that we do a lot of business with for this annual ten-day Japan-wide blues festival in which they would bring in three or four American Blues artists every year. It was late fall and they gave me an offer

on about how he was never going to play Japan again, the flight was too long, the food was terrible, it didn't agree with him, and he went on and on. So I listened and let him finish and then I said, "Okay Robert, I just wanted to let you know that they were

guy for everything and what a help he was to all these young musicians, if you *needed a ride* or you *needed a guitar* or you needed to put together a band for a gig or a session and he just goes on and on to a point that you thought Jesus Christ was going to walk

I said, "Robert I just want to let you know that we just got this offer to do five or six shows in Japan in May..." and before I could get any further in relaying the details to him, he cuts me off and starts to go off for about two minutes...

for Robert which was about six months down the road. So I called up Robert on the phone and I said, "Robert I just want to let you know that we just got this offer to do five or six shows in Japan in May..." and before I could get any further in relaying the details to him, he cuts me off and starts to go off for about two minutes, (He had been there in the late Eighties with Johnny Shines), and he just started to go on and

offering x-amount of dollars..." and there was about a half a second pause and he said, "I believe I'll take that one!"

In the late Eighties, Willie Dixon appeared at the W.C. Handy awards, they were giving him their Lifetime Achievement Award and he was thanking everyone when he suddenly began to go into this long sort of tribute about this mystery person in Chicago who had always been the go-to

through the door and introduce himself. And then he says it's Robert Jr. Lockwood and made Robert stand up and there was just this huge ovation in the house.

Robert was a complex guy, both musically and in his personality. He was often times tough, but he had a heart of gold. You never knew how he could be; you could get a different answer to the same question, depending on what day you asked

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him. He took what he did seriously and he had a deep love and appreciation for it. He was a real family guy. He had expressed to me one time that he moved to Cleveland because he thought it was a better place to raise his family. And how many guys like Robert do *that*? I used to call him “Old-Softy”.

—*Jack Randall currently works at Ted Kurland Associates in Boston and represents a number of top performers such as Branford Marsalis, Sonny Rollins, Vernon Reid and Chick Corea.*

ANTHONY SAPIENZA:

Back in 2000, I arranged a meeting with Robert Lockwood, Jr. to discuss the possibility of my writing his biography. I drove to Cleveland from New York and took a room at a local hotel for our meeting. I wanted to bring him something special, so gathered all the audacity I could muster and wrote him a song: “Back To The Delta,” in the style of Robert Johnson’s “Kind Hearted Woman”.

Lockwood was going to meet me at my hotel room at two in the afternoon, and I

spent all morning pacing the floor and obsessing in the mirror to octuple check that I looked “cool” enough. Two o’clock came and went. So did three. By four I was feeling like the unpopular geek on prom night. So I did what any seasoned journalist would do — I went down to the hotel bar and got drunk with the locals.

The next day came a call from Roy Lockwood — Robert Lockwood’s son and agent — crammed with sincere apologies. We agreed to try it again. I’d meet Lockwood in the city, and this time Roy would pick me up.

Roy arrived right on time, and we chatted for a bit in the room. He noticed my guitar and I played him the tune I had written for his father. He tapped his foot, nodded his head, played the air-drum on his knee, and overall gave a pretty good impression of someone not being assaulted by bad music. That was good enough for me.

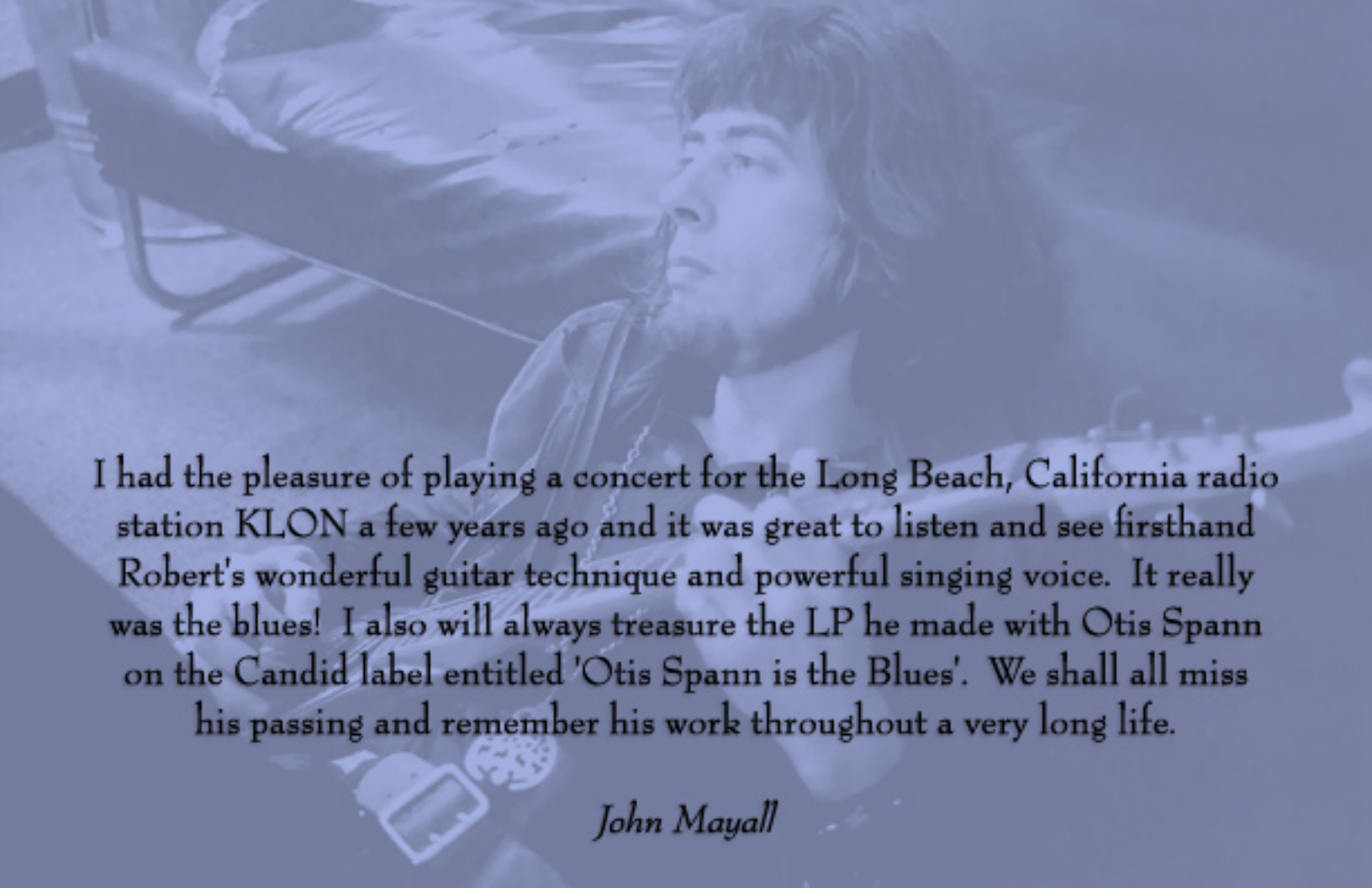
On the drive, Roy informed me that we would be meeting his father at his lawyer’s office in town. Well now, that sounded frightening. I started to wonder if maybe my song hadn’t been that great after all.

We ran into Lockwood outside the lawyer’s building. He didn’t look very happy to meet me. As we walked through the building and took the elevator, I couldn’t shake the feeling that something had gone wrong, but for the life of me I couldn’t figure out what it might be.

We sat down with Lockwood’s lawyer, and he cut right to the chase: before Lockwood said word one, they would need something in the neighborhood of \$35,000.

Well, that wasn’t what I expected, and it was better than any of my paranoid delusions about why Lockwood might not like me, but it wasn’t a big help. If I emptied my wallet, closed the bank account, sold my stocks, and checked for change in the couch, I could probably come up with as much as \$40, give or take.

I explained that \$35,000 is a *huge* book advance for anyone who wasn’t about to reveal that he was secretly one of the Beatles, and that to my knowledge no publishing company would front that kind of dough without *at least* a sample chapter. Some kind of guarantee of massive sales



I had the pleasure of playing a concert for the Long Beach, California radio station KLON a few years ago and it was great to listen and see firsthand Robert’s wonderful guitar technique and powerful singing voice. It really was the blues! I also will always treasure the LP he made with Otis Spann on the Candid label entitled ‘Otis Spann is the Blues’. We shall all miss his passing and remember his work throughout a very long life.

John Mayall

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would be helpful, too. The Lawyer rattled off a bunch of legal gobbledegook that I pretended to understand and we agreed to, “see what happens.”

I invited Roy, his wife, and some friends out for dinner. (I would have invited Lockwood, but considering that I needed 35 grand to talk to him, I didn’t even want to ask what the charge to take him to dinner would be).

I told Roy I’d take him anywhere he liked, hoping for some local gem that the tourists didn’t know about. He chose Red Lobster. Which was fine.

We had a ball, and Roy and family were warm and gracious company. I suggested to Roy that things might go better if his dad could get to know me a bit, and he suggested that I come to a gig they would playing in Montreal in a couple of weeks. We made the date.

Lockwood replied, “Would I have an eight piece mother-fucking band if I *didn’t*?” And that was about it for the interview. Maybe Alex should have written him a song.

While Alex and I were watching the show from the side of the stage, I apologized for Lockwood’s unresponsiveness. Alex wrote something in his little notebook and laughed, “Hey, don’t worry — some of these old-timers are like that. It’s cool just meeting him!”

He was right, and the show was smoking hot. I hope I still have that kind of energy when I’m eighty-five.

Lockwood played and sang his standards to a packed house while a couple of young French girls in the audience drew pictures of him in their sketchbooks. Roy was cool and invited me to a show they’d be doing at Terra Blues in New York City in a couple of

Jimmy Vivino and the booking agent for the Conan show.

“He’s going to talk, right?” I asked Roy.

“Sure man, he’s looking forward to seeing you again!” Roy took us to a little restaurant across the street, which was empty save for Lockwood who was eating a roasted chicken, a side of greasy vegetables, and some home-fried potatoes.

With Roy as our guide, Caleb and I sat down with Lockwood for a while. I told him about Vivino, the Conan show, and Woody Mann, and it must have made an impression because he finally talked to me. All he said was, “Pass the salt” — but it was a start.

“He’s warming up to you,” Roy assured us a little later, and I went to the club to retrieve Lockwood’s guests. Vivino (who apparently knows his shit when it comes to blues geniuses with self-inflicted lockjaw)

After a spell, Alex got down to business. He took out a pencil and his little black notebook and asked, “So, you still like touring?”

Lockwood replied, “Would I have an eight piece mother-fucking band if I didn’t?” And that was about it for the interview.

Maybe Alex should have written him a song.

When I got back home, I called my friend and mentor Alex Shoumatoff, who happens to have digs in Montreal. Would he like to come with me and interview Lockwood? *Robert Lockwood... Robert Johnson... a deal with the devil at the crossroads?* Who wouldn’t? So when the time came we hooked up, had a *pastis* or two in a local café, and headed off to the gig.

Roy greeted us enthusiastically and brought us upstairs to the dressing room. There was Robert Lockwood hanging out with his band — a bottle of Crown Royal on the table, a glass in his hand, and nobody with a law degree in sight. He even recognized me and greeted me with a slight smile. “Mr. Lockwood, this is my good friend Alex Shoumatoff, he’s a writer for *Vanity Fair* and *Rolling Stone* and would like to interview you for a possible story.” Lockwood gave him an acknowledging look and we sat down.

After a spell, Alex got down to business. He took out a pencil and his little black notebook and asked, “So, you still like touring?”

I gave it one more shot: “Listen Roy, I can call Jimmy Vivino from the Conan O’Brien band. Maybe he could come to the show and maybe they’d be interested in having your Dad appear on *Conan*. But he *has* to talk to them!”

Roy was thrilled, “He will, he will. That’s great!”

So I called Jimmy. I asked if they might like to have Lockwood as a guest on the show while he’s in town and he thought it was a terrific idea. I called Woody Mann and invited him to come and meet Lockwood as well. So on the day of the Terra Blues show, my buddy Caleb and I got in the car and headed for New York City. We weren’t on the highway for more than a few minutes when Caleb spotted Lockwood and his band’s van. This had to be a sign— of what, I didn’t know, but it was definitely a sign. We pulled up alongside the van and I honked the horn a dozen times, but no one turned around. Maybe Lockwood saw me and thought I was stalking him..

We got to Terra Blues and met up with Roy. Woody Mann was there and so was

chatted Lockwood up a bit, dropped a few names, and, to my surprise, actually got Lockwood to say a few words back. And they were even interesting, relevant words. But Lockwood wouldn’t say anything to the booking agent, and he ended up leaving mid-show to finish some business back at NBC.

Robert Lockwood played some great music at the intimate Terra Blues, and during a break he did the most astounding thing: he came over, put his arm around me, and asked me to run a couple of errands for him. I was delighted that he’d spoken to me in multiple complete sentences without charge — it made me feel like I was really on top of my game.

We never did pursue the book deal. I would have loved to hear about his life and be the *griot* that passed it on. I would have loved to cook with him. I would have died happy had he performed (or even had a chance to hear) the song I wrote. But the smiles he passed to me and the things he said for the rest of that night were more than enough. For a moment in time, I had befriended a historical figure — a legend

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in the blues world. Mr. Lockwood, when we meet again, I'll bring the salt!

—Anthony Sapienza

Back To The Delta
(For Robert Jr. Lockwood)

By Anthony Sapienza

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I'm goin' back to the Delta,
hit that Highway 49.
I'm goin' back to the Delta,
hit that Highway 49.

I don't need no big black limo,
just a freight train will be fine.

I got my old guitar,
Bring my Mississippi string tie.
I got my old guitar,
Bring my 'ssissppi string tie.

Gonna sing it from my soul,
make all them pretty womens cry.

Goin' down to the Levee,
'bout a quarter past ten.
Goin' down to the Levee,
'bout a quarter past ten.

Gonna sing it one time,
sure gonna do it again.

I'm goin' back to the Delta,
That's the place I oughta be.
I'm goin' back to the Delta,
That's the place I oughta be.

Gonna sing my song so sweetly,
make a blind blues singer see!

ROY BOOK BINDER:

Tuesday Nov. 21st at 4:59, Robert Lockwood passed...I guess we all knew that his life would be different at best after suffering a stroke on Friday Nov.3rd. Miss Mary had a message on the website that she was not receiving calls or e-mails. But by Sat. I had to call. I apologized and she said, 'I didn't mean you..'

I loved my friendship with Robert. Looking back, way back, it didn't come easy. I was introduced to him a few times over the years



Sam Carr, Bob Corritore and Robert Jr. Lockwood in Mississippi



at festivals and clubs, and he always looked at me suspiciously, I guess. Sometimes people open up to you and sometimes they don't.

Playing an acoustic blues festival in Blue Hill, Maine about 10 years ago, Robert and I were teamed up for the evening concert.

Delta. Hacksaw was a blankety blank blank, octopus on the guitar". I stared back into his eyes and said I really liked to hear him play piano better. Finally, I got a smile out of the old man! He laughed and said, "you really blankety blank knew him..." Robert had a great high pitched laugh that

I wanted and always had a place to get away. He looked at me approvingly when I told him I booked myself, recorded for my own label and that I was self managed. He always made me feel good about myself and about music as well and the way I handled my career.

He was up on stage, by himself and was looking into my eyes when I said, "Hacksaw Harney stayed at my apartment for two days ! "... Robert said, "He was the best guitar player in the Delta. Hacksaw was a blankety-blank -blank, octopus on the guitar".

Each night, the festival paired and 'old timer' with a younger player to open up the show.

At the sound check I was again introduced to Mr. Lockwood. He was up on stage, by himself and was looking into my eyes when I said, "Hacksaw Harney stayed at my apartment for two days ! "... Robert said, "He was the best guitar player in the

in the following years always made me feel good.

That was the beginning of a friendship I will always treasure. After the sound check Robert was looking around my little 'tour bus' and I invited him in. He liked the idea that I was self contained, didn't have to ask anybody for a cup of coffee or something to eat, could lay down and take a nap whenever

Sitting in my 'tour bus', Robert asked what was that sitting on the table. I told him it was a Sabine Guitar tuner. I showed him how it stuck on the front of the guitar. He asked me to write down the name of it so he could get one. I told him he could have mine as I had two. "just write it down for me" he told me. "I'll make you a deal Robert", I said. "You show me how you

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play that song Little Boy Blue that you recorded in 1941 and I'll give you the tuner". He laughed again and said "That's a deal, get your guitar".

The morning after the festival, at about 6:30 am, there was a knock on my motor home door. I stumbled to the door in my pajamas and there was Robert and his wife. He told me they had to catch an early plane home and that whenever I got to Cleveland, That they had a big house I could stay in with plenty of indoor bathrooms. I'll never forget that weekend.

I was invited to perform at Robert's 85th Birthday party in Cleveland at Wilbert's. When I said hello, I just said, "Roy Book Binder, Hacksaw's buddy". He laughed that high pitched laugh of his and said, "I know who you are". That was the first time I got to meet and hear his band and that was very cool. In the years that followed, I always made sure to get to town on Wednesday so I could catch RL and the big band at Fat Fish Blue before my gig. They worked together like a well oiled machine. Miss Mary and Robert always made me feel welcome in their lovely home in Cleveland and I will always remember Robert serving his special Catfish dinner with slaw and home style potato salad. Nancy and I never had such a fine catfish dinner. We discussed music, musicians, friendship and life in his music room as Nancy and Miss Mary talked away the afternoon out front.

We surprised Robert, Miss Mary and Honeyboy Edwards at BB Kings in NYC last June when we walked back stage. Me and the Wife happened to be in town visiting my Mother. What a show

Robert and Gene did that night...must have been 800 people there and they went wild.

I was always surprised and thrilled when Robert drove himself down to see me perform at Night Town in Cleveland every time I played there.

I consider myself a very lucky man to have had such a friend as Robert Lockwood Jr. and I miss him already.

—Roy Book Binder

He was a true gentleman and superb musician and adept musician, beyond the genre of blues and well into the realm of a sophisticated jazz player. I had the honor of presenting him with the Mississippi Valley Blues Society's "River Road Lifetime Achievement" Award a few years ago at their blues festival in Davenport, IA. Just as memorable for me was sharing the bill with Mr. Lockwood and Johnny Dyer for the Cascade Blues Association's "Willamette Delta Showcase" concert at the Portland Art Museum in 2004. It was a milestone in my blues journey to be on the concert bill with such a legendary musician.

I will always cherish the memory of one of the greatest blues musicians to have tuned a guitar.

—Michael "Hawkeye" Herman

Another great Delta bluesman gone. He played the Blues the way he lived his life. Straight up, with grit and soul. He will be missed. ☸

—Bumpy Roads, Midnight Blues Online Blues Radio

**Born to the blues,
he honored his birthright.
Sing on, Robert Jr.
*A friend.***



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Robert Jr. Lockwood 1915 – 2006

