

# The E-Flat Porch Band

*Pilgrims, the avocado green refrigerator, and angst-free music*

By Christopher Foster

Sometimes the smallest, most unlikely connections produce results that are utterly delightful, or deeply troublesome, or even, in rare cases, history-changing.

In 1620, for example, a rapidly-depleting supply of beer on the Mayflower — which had been knocked off course by the Gulf Stream — forced the Pilgrims to abandon their original Hudson River destination for the unset-

tled wilds of New England. Incredibly, this lack of beer led to the first steps in the formation of our nation.

How? In seventeenth-century England the quality of water was unreliable and beer was considered essential to a healthy shipboard diet. As the Mayflower approached North America and discovered itself 500 miles north of the nearest English settlement, its beer was severely rationed and illness, includ-

ing the dreaded signs of scurvy, soon appeared. The health situation grew dire but poor nautical conditions prevented southward progress. Without approval from England, the Pilgrims decided to make their settlement along Cape Cod Bay, and on November 11, 1620, before disembarking, they drafted the Mayflower Compact. This agreement, written to unite Pilgrims who disagreed over governance in the new circum-

stances, is today revered as the first document providing a basis for secular government in America.

Unlikely connections can be amazing, can't they? Imagine that — a lack of beer led to the foundation of what later became the United States!

Now let's talk about a more local connection, one just as unexpected (if not as influential to global geopolitics!) as the link between the Pilgrim's lack of beer and the birth of America.

In 1996, Duane Brown and his wife, Adah Leah Wolf, had just moved and were looking for a refrigerator for their new home in McKinney. They called an appliance repairman, Rudy Littrell, and asked if he might be able to find one. Rudy replied that he happened to have one that was, in fact, available at that moment — the problem, however, was that it was an old, not-so-attractive avocado green model. Duane and Adah Leah exclaimed, "That's perfect!" It turned out the couple's oven was avocado green, too, and they'd been hoping to find a matching appliance.



*Across, the beauty of the instrument is matched by the enjoyment Duane and Rudy feel in making music. Photo by the author.*

*Inset: The door of the infamous green 'fridge that started it all.*

*Above, The E-Flat Porch band at Chestnut Square in 2001. Photo courtesy of Adah Leah Wolf.*

*Below, Rudy Littrell (left) plays bass and harmonica and Duane Brown plays the acoustic guitar in the E-Flat Porch Band, here "jammin" in the back yard.*

*Photo by Christopher Foster.*

Duane and Adah Leah went to look at Rudy's fridge, and Duane and Rudy began talking and discovered they both loved music and they both played instruments. It turned out they thought it might be fun to get together and jam sometime. And the rest, as they say, is history!

See? Unlikely connections at work again! Unbeknownst to the two men at the time, the purchase of the avocado green fridge would launch a rich and long-lasting musical collaboration — as well as provide inspiration for "jam sessions" amongst talented local musicians that continue to bring joy to music lovers throughout Texas.

Here's what happened once the fridge was installed next to the matching oven: Duane and Rudy began playing together, often meeting on the porch of Duane and Adah Leah's Lamar Street home. The men shared a fondness for acoustic music, particularly blues, folk, jazz, and all manner of melodic tunes suffused with nostalgia and/or humor. They decided to keep playing — they were soon getting invitations to perform



## McKinney Facts

- The geographic center of the City of McKinney (according to current city limits) is near McKinney North High School.
- The latitude of McKinney is 33.197N. The longitude is -96.615W.
- The coldest day on record in Collin County was 18 below zero on January 13, 1877. The hottest day was August 10, 1936, 118, the day Helen Hall moved to the area.
- On April 15, 1884, Frank James (of the fabled James Gang) struck a man over the head with a spittoon at the Elm Saloon on McKinney's east side (currently a lawn mower repair shop on east Louisiana Street).
- Electric light was first supplied to McKinney in May of 1889.
- McKinney High School's first graduating class of three graduated on May 2, 1889.
- The downtown McKinney square was first paved with bricks on August 17, 1908.
- Telephone services began in McKinney October 20, 1883.
- Collin McKinney, who was a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, was also instrumental in passing legislation insisting that county lines in North Texas follow straight lines.

## NOW WE'RE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

Introducing Baylor Family Medicine at McKinney,  
offering quality medical care to  
McKinney and the surrounding communities.

### Heather Bass, M.D. has joined Baylor Family Medicine at McKinney.

Dr. Bass received her medical degree from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. She then completed her internship and residency at the University of Texas Health Center at Tyler in Tyler, Texas. She is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians, Texas Academy of Family Physicians, Smith County Medical Society, and the Texas Medical Association. Her special interests include women's health, pediatrics, adolescent medicine, and dermatology.

For an appointment, call (214) 504-9916



A Baylor-HealthTexas Affiliate

2730 Virginia Parkway, Suite 200

McKinney, TX 75071

(214) 504-9916 • (214) 733-8097 Fax



Physicians are employees of HealthTexas Provider Network and are neither employees nor agents of Baylor Health Care System, Baylor Regional Medical Center Plano or Baylor Health Care System's subsidiary, community or affiliated medical centers. ©2007 Baylor Health Care System. BID-BFMM-Bass '08

at parties, weddings, and other gigs — and thus the E-Flat Front Porch Band formally came into being. Adah Leah became the band's manager, and she continues to coordinate their gigs, handle correspondence, and smooth the way for their musical projects, including the release of three CDs. Additional performers have found themselves attracted by the easygoing style and friendly charisma of the band, and sometimes join in as 'guest members,' particularly local songwriter Chris Baker Davies, who plays mandolin and provides a lovely female counterpoint vocal in many of the band's songs.

The band is often asked about its name, which came from a singular feature discovered about Duane's front porch — it resonated to E-Flat whenever Rudy hit that note on his bass. Taking this architectural quirk as a divine sign (or at least recognizing it as a great moniker!) the name stuck, and the band now enjoys one of the finer names in the region.

A remarkable thing about the E-Flat Porch Band is the diversity of functions for which they perform. They have 'regular' gigs, of course — they're often found at Café Málaga during Second Saturdays on the downtown square — and they're comfortable playing indoors or out. They perform at numerous McKinney venues, and they really do enjoy playing on front porches! The band has played at Six Flags, the Texas State Fair, San Antonio's Texas Folklife Festival, and its shows have been enjoyed at folk festivals, storytelling gatherings, churches, schools, coffeehouses, museums, even libraries! A favorite gig for the band is the Texas Metal Arts Festival in Gruene, Texas, held annually in mid-September.

One of the duo's most memorable evenings came several years ago when they were returning from a show in Richardson. A massive traffic accident closed down Hwy. 75, so Duane and Rudy removed their instruments from their bus and held an impromptu "freeway jam" for surrounding drivers, who abandoned their cars to enjoy the performance. "It was truly a captive audience," jokes Duane.

Duane Brown has loved string instruments since childhood, particularly the guitar. Originally from Pampa, Texas, Duane taught himself to play at an early age, grow-

ing from a toddler's act of serenading neighbors with Roger Miller tunes 'strummed' on a broom to songwriting and playing in bands. In 2003 the band played in Pampa for the city's Woody Guthrie Festival, a festival paying homage to the great Woody Guthrie, who got his start as a folksinger in Pampa. Pete Seeger was the featured performer at the concert on Saturday night; the E-Flat Porch Band was the featured music for the Friday night Beans and Cornbread dinner, an informal event. Duane and Rudy were surprised and delighted when Pete Seeger attended the dinner and didn't hesitate to come up and jam with the guys on the stage. Duane says, "Playing with Pete was special for me — just amazing!"

Rudy Littrell is a native son of McKinney who plays a variety of instruments, though his big standup bass is what first catches the audience's attention. Rudy studied the drums in college and says he's a "recovering percussionist." His 'addiction' is evident in that he utilizes a variety of devices that keep his hands and feet busy: hi-hat, tambourine, harmonica, even an aurally-delightful stomp box fashioned from a wooden Dr. Pepper crate. Rudy is a delight to listen to, as well — between musical numbers listeners are entertained with his storytelling virtuosity and the fun, sharp-as-a-tack banter between band members.

In addition to the duo's repertoire of American tunes spanning genres and generations, they write many of their own songs. Both men have fine — if delightfully wicked — senses of humor, and this finds ready expression in their satirical songs ranging (for example) from poking fun at the privileged 'Plano lifestyle' to the luck of washed-up performers enjoying second careers in the theaters of Branson.

Of the many people interviewed about their experiences with the E-Flat Porch Band, the adjective used most often was the word "fun." The band believes music is too often used as a way for songwriters to impress upon listeners their anxieties and gripes about the world. Rudy says, "Folk music can be so whiney, but that gets old quickly — music should be enjoyable!" Even when the subjects of their songs come in for a little satirical teasing, the E-Flat Porch Band does it in a spirit of fun. As the band likes to say, "The motto here is 'angst-

## McKinney's Friendly Downtown Dentist


---

### Family & Cosmetic Dentistry

🦷 Family Dentistry 🦷 Teeth Whitening 🦷 Implants  
🦷 Root Canals 🦷 Extractions 🦷 Sleep Dentistry

**972.542.3324**

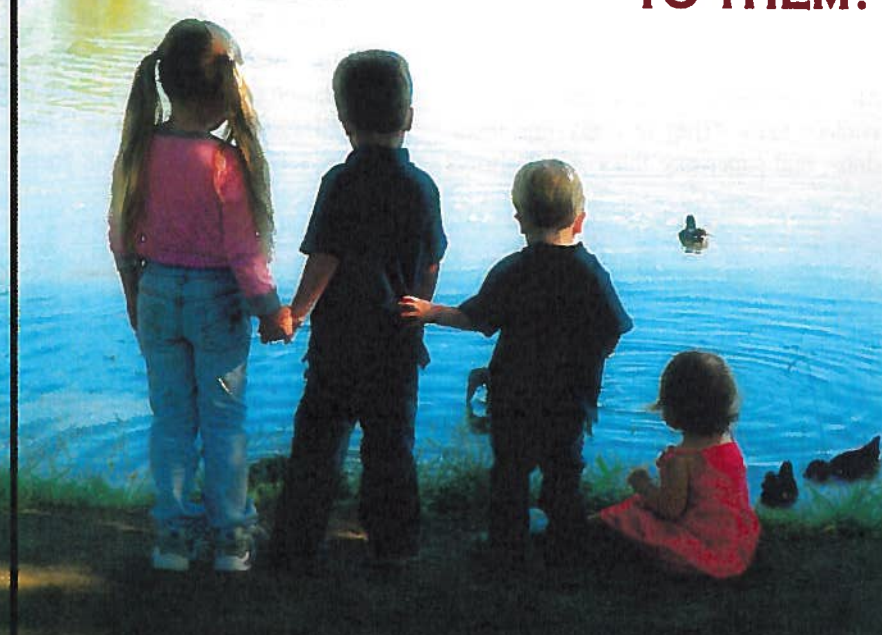
**401 S. Tennessee McKinney, TX 75069**




Sam Patel, DDS

# IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO YOU...

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THEM?





## APRIL NORDHAUS

### BOYD·VEIGEL, P.C.

ATTORNEYS

**(972) 562-9700**

**WWW.BOYD-VEIGEL.COM**

WILLS • LIVING TRUSTS • POWER OF ATTORNEY  
 APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIAN OF CHILD  
 LIFE INSURANCE TRUSTS • LIVING WILLS

**218 EAST LOUISIANA, MCKINNEY, TX 75069**

Photography provided by Wendolin Mercado. Not certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization.



Rudy and Duane at San Antonio's Folklife Festival in 2003.

Photo courtesy of Adah Leah Wolf.

free music." Duane and Rudy don't want to stew the audience in a broth of angst and misery — they prefer to see listeners tapping their toes and having a good time!

Another musician who enjoys jamming with the E-Flat Porch Band is McKinney Fire Dept. Chief Mark Wallace. An accomplished guitarist himself, Wallace says, "They're really fine musicians, and super-nice folks, too. I always

have fun playing with them, especially at 'house jams' — those are terrific!"

As fun as the band is, their musicianship and dedication to carrying on the traditions of acoustic music is impressive, too. The E-Flat Porch Band is on the Touring Artist Roster of the Texas Commission on the Arts, an honor they've enjoyed since 2001. Artists and ensembles seeking selection must submit an applica-

tion that reflects efforts to share artistic or cultural traditions, and they must be willing to travel and perform. Other bands sharing this distinction with the E-Flat Porch Band include Asleep at the Wheel, Brave Combo, and the Light Crust Doughboys.

Pretty cool, don't you think? A living, breathing Texas institution, the E-Flat Porch Band has its roots — and remains based — right here in McKinney. And to think . . . it all started with an avocado green refrigerator.

To learn more about the E-Flat Porch Band and view its performance schedule, see [www.e-flatters.com](http://www.e-flatters.com) ■

*About the author:*  
Christopher Foster is a writer living in McKinney, Texas.



# NEW BUSINESS CHAMBER MEMBERS

*New and established McKinney businesses that have recently joined the Chamber. For information about becoming a member, call 972.542.0163.*

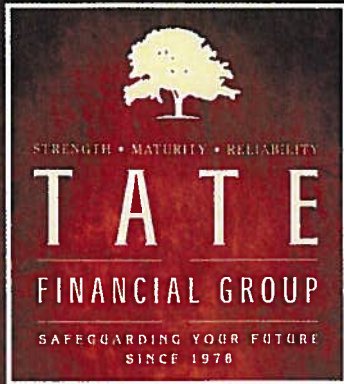
- Bergmann & Associates
- Best Buy
- Castillo Management Services
- Castle Montessori of McKinney
- Coldwell Banker Apex
- Creative Tutors
- Credit Union Of Texas
- William C. Dowdy, Jr.
- Evelyn's Professional Janitorial
- Great Clips
- H2 Chiropractic
- Marlow C. Hunter, PC
- Jimmy Johns Gourmet Sandwiches
- Junior Academy of McKinney
- Lash Of Luxury
- McKinney Allergy and Asthma Center
- McKinney Gym Equipment
- McKinney Peridontics

- McKinney Spine & Wellness
- Murphy Business & Financial
- Olympus Family Medicine
- Primrose School Of Stone Brooke
- Strada Verde
- Tranquility Dental
- Wal-Mart Market Office



*Unique by nature.*

**CELEBRATING  
30 YEARS**



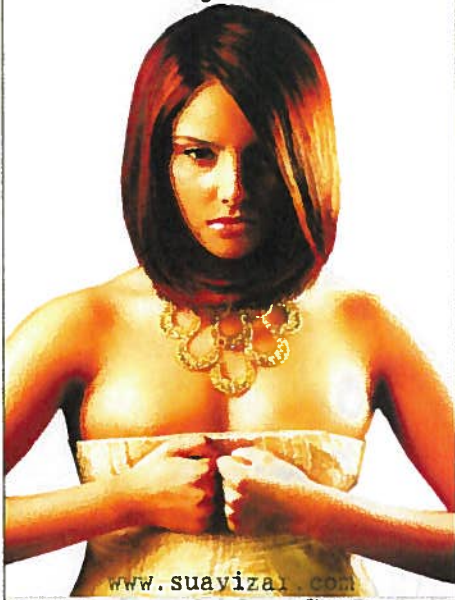
**DARRELL L. TATE, CFP®**  
Financial & Retirement Planning  
**972-529-3888**  
[www.tatefinancialgroup.com](http://www.tatefinancialgroup.com)

2111 Eldorado Parkway, Suite 100  
McKinney, TX 75070

Securities and investment advisory services offered through FSC Securities Corporation, member FINRA/SIPC and a registered investment adviser. FSC Securities Group is not affiliated with FSC Securities Corporation or registered as a broker-dealer or investment advisor.

BOOK NOW FOR YOUR COMPLIMENTARY CONSULTATION

Tone It Down and Relax  
**suavizar**  
salon



[www.suavizar.com](http://www.suavizar.com)

**(214) 388-9747**

977 State Hwy 121 Suite 120  
Allen TX 75013

**A ECO FRIENDLY SALON**

ALL HAIR CUTS, COLOR AND MAKE-UP FOR ADS ARE DONE BY SUAVIZAR SALON

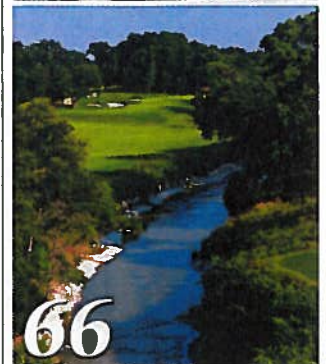
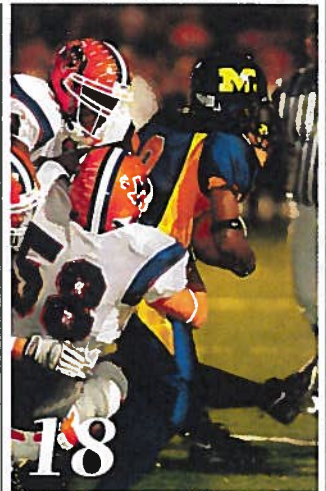
# McKinney Living

September 2008

Volume 19, Number 7

## Table of Contents

- 18 LIVING** for football  
Friday Night Lights in McKinney.  
*By Barry Larsen*
- 30 community LIVING**  
Brandon Industries' business is a "Family  
Affair". *By Jennifer Miller*
- 36 LIVING** with victory  
Girls Soccer Madness! *By Jen Kemp*
- 44 LIVING** with progress  
Technology bridges the gap between  
generations. *By Toni Andrukaitis*
- 52 LIVING** with a dream  
An entertaining career in hospitality  
management. *By Mark Robinson*
- 56 LIVING** for music  
The E-Flat Porch Band. *By Christopher Foster*
- 66 LIVING** for golf  
Above Par – PGA TOUR's Nationwide  
Championship. *By Timothy Lee*



### McKinney Living Editorial Committee

Editor - Sara Simpson Thomas / *Square One Mortgage*

Assistant Editor - Deb Fitzgerald / *McKinney Chamber*

Dr. Carrie Alfieri / *Pinnacle Eye Associates, P.A.*

Beth Bentley / *McKinney Housing Authority*

Glenn Coleman / *Ebby Halliday REALTORS*

CoCo Good / *City of McKinney*

J. Eric Higgins, P.C. / *Loughmiller - Higgins, Attorneys at Law*

Laura Kay Houser / *Happiness is ... Quilting!*

Tonya Knott / *A Web Site Checkup*

Mike Livezey / *Cutter Aviation*

Harvey Oaxaca / *McKinney ISD*

Lemuel Randolph / *City of McKinney - Parks*

Robb Temple / *Pathfinder Credit Solutions*

Sherry Tucker David / *Tee Bee Caprock*

Lisa Vasquez / *Collin College*

### Advertising Sales

Beth McGuire, Angie Toles, Andrew Hardin

### Art Director/Production

Garden Graphics: Georgene Wood, Tisha L. Davis,  
Stephen Cymerman

### Publisher

Andrew Hardin / *McKinney Chamber*



**McKinney Living** is published 10 times annually by **McKinney Chamber Publications, Inc.** For information on this magazine or subscriptions write: 1650 W. Virginia, Ste. 110, McKinney, TX 75069 or call 972-542-0165. Copyright 2008, exclusive of proprietary ads and artwork designs. All rights reserved. No portion may be reproduced in whole or in part by any means without prior written permission from the publisher. Placement of advertising is not a personal endorsement by the Chamber, publisher or its representatives, and no liability arising therefrom is assumed. Story ideas for *McKinney Living* should be emailed to [dftzgerald@mcKinneytx.org](mailto:dftzgerald@mcKinneytx.org) for consideration.