

Dreams Do Come True

Story by Charlotte Huntley

Tracy Beck has been places. From Wisconsin to Montana to Utah to Oregon and back to Wisconsin, Beck has seen enough to know what she likes. She likes the outdoors and she likes music.

"I've always been interested in music," she said. "I started playing sax when I was in fourth grade." She has always been interested in writing, too-poetry and short stories. "I always wanted to be a novelist when I was going to college," she said.

Beck grew up in Brookfield, but she is not a city girl. "I hate the city," she declared. Her parents had a summer home near Elkhorn, where she got her taste for living away from traffic and concrete. After college, she moved to Park West, Utah, where the Olym-pics were held. "I was a ski bum there for a while," she laughed.

She continued to write poetry and she kept up with her music. She and her friends would go to the top of the mountain to play guitar and bongos. "We'd make our own music. I'd play sax." But she realized she couldn't express anything she had written while she was playing the sax, so it was only natural for her to take guitar.

"There was a girl named Sandy who played guitar and she has a beautiful voice, so all that kind of inspired me to pick up the guitar." She smiled. "I picked it up really fast, she said. "The finger-picking came really easy to me; it just came."

She eventually moved to Portland. But living far away from family became a big problem. Trips home were costing her plenty; she could only afford to come home once a year. "I'm close to my family, so it just wasn't enough," she said. She decided to move back to Wisconsin.

Now back in the Midwest, Beck lives north of Elkhorn

with her husband, Paul, and very near her parents. Talking with her, she was dressed in dark denim pants and a black top that emphasized her slender figure. Her blonde hair framed a face that often broke into a smile.

Seated in her living room, over a cup of coffee, she recalled how her parents reacted to her taking up the guitar. She explained that at first, she just did it for fun. "When I started on the guitar, I started writing my own songs right away because I wasn't good enough to play other people's songs. I wanted to play so bad, I just started making up stuff. They weren't good songs or anything like that.

"I'd invite my mom over and say, 'Mom, you have to hear this song.'" Beck said her mom would say, 'Can we talk about something else?' or 'Can you put that thing down for a second?'

"She wasn't interested in it because it was just so bad." But Beck didn't give up and pulled out another song for her mom to hear. "Well, you don't like this one, listen to this one." And she would launch into another song while her mother, "She's rolling her eyes," Beck laughed.

"My dad said, 'Well, just keep up at it, you'll get better.'" So she did. "It takes time," said Beck, and soon her own songs improved and she became good enough to play other artists' songs as well.

Now Beck's mom comes over and requests songs. "What a difference," Beck said.

"When I need an opinion about a song, she's very honest. I always come to her to give me opinions on what she thinks. She'll really let me know the truth. She won't sugar-coat it at all."

Beck didn't expect to cut a



Tracy Beck's CDs are available at Deakin Isle in Elkhorn and at her performances.

CD and perform in venues around the area, but that's what happened. She started networking and one thing led to another. "I wasn't planning on playing out or anything, but so I'm happy. It just kind of happened. I didn't think it would go this far; I was just doing it for fun."

Now, she sees the difference between playing for herself and playing in a performance. "It's a lot more work when you're playing out live. Sometimes when you don't want to play, you have to play, but that's all part of the sacrifice that you make."

Her agent is the Ellis International Talent Agency, which helped her produce her newly recorded CD, *Let the Wind Carry Me*. The project began in January of 2002 and it took 10 months to finish. Beck came to the recording studio, The Band Center in Milwaukee, and worked for two or three hours a week. She had performed live by that time, but she had never done any recording before. "It's

totally different. You have to be so perfect; you can't make one little tiny little mistake because it will show up in the recording. So that was really hard."

She explained that they wanted a live recording of "Beat-up Blue Chevrolet," "but I had to sing it seven times before we got a good take of it." After that, all she could think was, "I just want to go home," she laughed. But she succeeded in getting it down live, without one mistake.

"Beat-up Blue Chevrolet" is still Beck's pick for being fun to play. It has a good beat and the lyrics flow.

*I had a real good time
With the top pulled down
The wind in our face
Riding with you down the
101 highway.
Yes, I want to thank you
For a beautiful day
Cruising with you
In your beat-up blue
Chevrolet.*

Beck didn't expect to cut a CD and perform in venues around the area, but that's what happened. She started networking and one thing led to another. "I wasn't planning on playing out or anything, but so I'm happy. It just kind of happened. I didn't think it would go this far; I was just doing it for fun." Now, she sees the difference

between playing for herself and playing in a performance. "It's a lot more work when you're playing out live. Sometimes when you don't want to play, you have to play, but that's all part of the sacrifice that you make."

Besides "Chevrolet," there are four other songs on her new CD. "My favorite one to listen to is 'Let the Wind Carry Me.' But everyone out there has their own opinion," she said. Her other songs are "Dreams Come True," "Rib-bons and Bows" and "Big Sky Montana," which, Beck said, "talks a lot about being out of the city," reflecting her love of open spaces. "I'm an outdoorsy person," she said. "That's why I spent so much time in the mountains."

Beck continues to write as well as perform, and she continues to seek the road less traveled. "The outdoors inspires me a lot," she said. When it's summertime, I'll take my bike and I'll go on a 10-mile trek and I'll find a place where absolutely nobody is. I tend to write a lot of my stuff like that-when I'm outside. Writing seems to come easier in the summer 'cause in the winter sometimes you're just too cooped up to really get inspired by anything.

"Mother Nature inspires me a great deal," she went on. "When I feel the need to think, I'll go into the woods." She has written a song that reflects that, called "Mother Earth."

"I've thrown out a lot of songs; I can tell if it's going to be a good song," she said, "I'll enjoy playing it." If she doesn't react to it, "I know it's just not right for me." She has re-worked some of the rejected songs, but, she said, "Some of them are just not meant to be and you have to just disregard them."

When Beck first heard Joni Mitchell, she thought, "Wow, I wish I could play like that!" I like Bonnie Raitt, too. I have a lot of new songs that I'm working on that are more bluesy than what's on the CD, that were inspired by Bonnie Raitt. When I first heard her, especially her newer CD, I

really got curious into that type of playing."

In Milwaukee, she met Jeffery Robinson, a blues player who is teaching Beck techniques on the guitar, like bottleneck and slide. "He's influencing me toward the bluesy side, but I'm still keeping my roots in the type of music that I've always been very comfortable playing, which is just expressing myself in finger picking songs, light-hearted stuff. But then once in a while, I like to get down in the blues side," she said.

She is described as having a "wonderful blend of folk, country, blues and bluegrass and roots music all intertwined into one." She has a clear voice, but there is a touch of growl on the underside.

Beck performs a mix of her own songs with other well-known ones. For example, she had a list of 26 songs for her recent date at Starbucks in Lake Geneva. The list includes two Bonnie Raitt tunes, two by Fleetwood Mac-"Landslide" and "Over My Head"-as well as "Mercedes Benz," by Janis Joplin. I do a couple of fun covers that I like to do, like "Ode to Billy Joe," but the other ones are my original songs.

"Sometimes people like to hear something they know so they can sing along to it." Because Beck is fresh on the music scene, most people don't know her songs. Her friends and family not only know the words, they sing along with her as she performs. But no one else does, which Beck said probably causes other people to wonder, "How do they know the words?"

Her parents try to attend all her performances. "They've been really supportive. I've been really lucky that way," Beck said. "And I've been lucky to have a husband that's very supportive, too, because he doesn't mind when I'm down in the basement, where my studio is, for eight hours and I never

come upstairs, and he has to hear my songs over and over and over and over and over again," she chuckled. "He's very nice, very supportive."

She can see a bright future ahead of her as her dreams come true. "I see myself playing out a lot more, maybe in different states and having a following. Right now we are in the embryonic stages and I'm trying to establish a following. So in five years, I hope to have quite a big following, and then just go around the world and play my music and have fun," she smiled.

□□