



RpT – Richard Paul Thomas FAQ Sheet

Q - I understand you started playing guitar in the late 1950's. Who were your inspirations?

A – My story is not too different than many others who started at this or any other time. First, I should tell you that my dad was the reason I liked music. He didn't play an instrument but he had the most eclectic record collection I ever heard -- From Polkas & Waltzes (of course - we lived in Milwaukee) to Big Band, Country, Classical & Broadway Musicals. There was always music playing around our house, usually pretty loud. Then he bought me my own RCA 45RPM Record Player and things started to escalate.

Ever since I was very young, I loved music. By the mid-50's I knew that I wanted to play guitar & sing. I still remember playing my plastic Roy Rogers guitar and singing along with Ricky Nelson on the Ozzie and Harriet Show. I grew up in bands. I joined my first band while I was still in grade school. We were called "THE COUNTS" - Then came "THE POLARAS". Played with "RON & THE CONTINENTALS", "THE GAMBLERS", and others but I don't recall the names. They were all cover bands, playing other peoples music.

The Counts played the popular music of the day from Buddy Holly to Richie Valens and all the rock hits of the late 50's. We had an old reel to reel tape recorder at the time and recorded our rehearsals. From what I remember, we were pretty rough initially as could be expected. We blamed it on the distortion of the tapes but over time, and with a lot of practice, we began to improve. **The Polaras** was a band that really started to get it together. By this time, in addition to some of the earlier repertoire, we played The Beatles, Rolling Stones and The Kinks were the primary bands of choice along with songs like Gloria and many more that I can barely remember. I also sat in with a number of bands playing all sorts of music.

Q – When did you start getting involved with songwriting? A: Somewhere during my later high school years, my future wife Susan & I started singing together. I joined a folk group and Susan was a member of that group. We were called "THE TOO YOUNG TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT PAIN & SUFFERING SINGERS" or something like that. There were seven of us. I think we were quite good because we did some TV and radio shows pretty regularly. We broke up not too long after High School.

And then I started to work with Susan as a duet and in our band, "THE COLLECTION". She played piano but rarely used it to compose her songs. She would sing them acapella to me and I would have to create the music and arrangements. It was an exciting challenge. A friend of ours had a 4 track studio so we spent most evenings there recording our songs along with Radio/TV commercials and other projects. We sang together as a duo for over 12 years touring colleges and opening for a wide variety of performers (married for 7). As it turned out, she was trying to tell me things in her songs, and then got fed up with me because I didn't catch on. **FYI** – Susan Lindner eventually became Susan Thomas and is now Susan Gallion. She received a Grammy Nomination for her song *The Woman In Me* recorded by Crystal Gayle.

Q – What happened next? A: For me, life is amazing especially in the way changes and opportunities present themselves. The night Susan left (the day after Christmas – long story), I started writing a new song in my dreams (which I quite often still do). I saw myself playing guitar in a small recording studio in St. Augustine, Florida. Of course, in this case I couldn't remember anything else about the song after I woke up and quickly forgot the whole thing.

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A few days after Christmas, I called the New York office of the Cousteau Society and asked them if they needed any help. We initially met the Cousteau's in Milwaukee when they were producing an environmental event called **Involvement Days** and performed in concert with COUNTRY JOE OF THE FISH at that event.

Mose Richards, of The Cousteau Society, called me back a couple days later and asked me if I could come to Houston to work with the Involvement Day Program there. I never said "YES!" so fast in my life.

When I left Milwaukee, it was around 26 degrees - below zero. Thirty-six hours later -- I arrived in HOUSTON, TEXAS. It was sunny and the temperature was 69 degrees. I was Home!! Working for the Cousteau Society was quite an experience. In just under two year's time, I lived in Houston, Boston, Seattle, spent a month in Ohio, and traveled to San Francisco, L.A. and New York. Between each trip, I would return to my friends' house in Houston, they worked with Cousteau as well. After a while, I got a garage apartment for \$ 50 a month and used some of the money I made from selling our house in Milwaukee to purchase some gear for an 8 track studio.

That's when I started writing more of my own songs. I think the first one I recorded was **The Coal & The Flame**. Those songs ultimately wound up as a collection which I expanded into a one person play called **Captured Rainbow**, ultimately my first CD. I performed CR in a workshop type environment in Milwaukee, Chicago, San Francisco, and Houston, eventually performing it as a full production in Salado and Austin.

It took years for me to get my confidence back and to start performing again. Did I say Years? - I meant decades!

Q – Does that bring us up to today? A: Close - in 2012 I finished **The Wings Of My Heart** CD, produced by Chris Gage (Moonhouse Studios – Austin). I toured around Texas and the Midwest a little to support this release. We have recently completed on my latest CD **SALADO**. Chris and I dug thru about a couple dozen songs or so to choose the best of the group. We pulled out 8 new songs along with The Last Goodbye that I wrote from a poem by my friend, Wayne Garner, and **SALADO** with a new arrangement that brings out the real power of this epic tale of a stagecoach driver on his last trip home

Q – All your CD's have recorded with a band and yet you only perform as a solo artist. Can you explain the reasoning behind this decision? A: Well, the main reason is easy – economics. It costs too much to take a band on the road these days. Besides I like playing solo – it allows me the freedom to do whatever I like and to hopefully relate to the audience on a more personal basis. And, I am always on time for rehearsal and gigs. Most my touring days were as a duo so this is the closest I can get to that experience. I do miss the harmonies and energy from working with other players. Who knows, by this time next year I could have a band again.

As far as having more musicians joining me on the recordings, I feel the recording process allows me to put down the songs as I hear them in my head. I tend to play a fairly percussive, bass driven guitar style when I play solo – all I am trying to do is expand the songs to a level where someone hearing them for the first time will get the power that I am trying to achieve. When I play live, hopefully the audience can feel that energy in the music I play without the other instruments. That's why I mostly try to play listening rooms. I want to be able to create a conversation with the audience and relate to them instead of trying to sing over someone's conversation.

Q – How did you get the nickname RpT? A: When I was working for the Cousteau Society, people kept calling me RpT the AD (Assistant Director) and it stuck. Now all my friends call me RpT.

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