

Lowell Varney and Landon Messer and the Riverside Grass recorded tracks in December for a traditional album slated for spring release. Bill Price has signed new contracts with Cattle Records of West Germany and Allied Record Corp. of Hawaii.

"How Great Thou Art" is the title of an all-gospel instrumental album featuring banjoist Emmett Sullivan and Jerry and Tammy Sullivan. Summer Wages will record their second Rebel album this month. An April release date is planned. The Overland Express has completed its

first album for Webco, to be released in March. Half and Half, a northeastern Ohio band, plans to release its second album by early summer. Clyde and Marie Denny are recording a new album this winter.

According to the folks at Kentucky Fried Chicken, Sam Bush of the New Grass Revival is slated to produce the recording session (won as part of the prize in this past year's Best New Bluegrass Band Contest at the Festival in Louisville, Ky.) for the Ohio-based Blanchard Valley Bluegrass Boys.

KATHY KAPLAN

Kathy Kaplan died this past December 11, after a crippling illness that lingered for almost three years. Kathy was a unique individual, who brought to bluegrass and traditional country music a rare sensitivity, dedication and depth of appreciation; the music she loved is, and will remain, that much better because she cared about it. In the greater New York City area, far from its wellspring and before it became well-established in the area, Kathy found bluegrass on the all-night country music radio stations. From the beginning, she was drawn to the music's traditional forms; through the years, as the music increasingly departed from tradition, Kathy's understanding and appreciation of the music became an important barometer of authentic tradition as it (and she) persevered. Kathy never wanted her music to become inflexible—she wanted only that it remain honest and pure. Undaunted by the conflicted occasional-pedestal/second-class-citizen double standard she may have initially encountered, Kathy distinguished herself in any number of ways. For many years, she presented a series of excellent radio programs in New York; she became a frequent bluegrass festival M.C.; and she wrote many album liner notes whose standard of appreciation of the music and excellence of expression will not be surpassed. Said Ken Irwin of Rounder Records: "through the years, Kathy had a tremendous influence on the people at Rounder. She has helped select songs to record, she has written liner notes, and she consistently supported our efforts to promote traditional bluegrass. She helped guide our taste when we started out, and her influence can still be felt; songs that she suggested appear on recent or upcoming albums by Joe Val, the Johnson Mountain Boys, and Delia Bell." It is

bands like these, and her other favorites such as Hazel Dickens, Don Stover, Del McCoury & The Dixie Pals, and Bob Paisley & Southern Grass, who exemplify the authentic musical integrity that Kathy cherished in traditional bluegrass music. Dave Freeman of County Records had always had a high regard for both Kathy's knowledge and her capabilities; for County, Kathy produced two important albums, Delia Bell's (and Bill Grant's) first major-label LP, and the Larry Sparks' Hank Williams album. And as much as she appreciated the music and her favorite performers, so did they appreciate her, too. As Joe Val put it: "she was a lover of traditional bluegrass... she did a lot for the music in the Northeast by way of promoting live shows, doing radio shows, and just encouraging people to listen to traditional bluegrass. We'll miss her a great deal." And, as if that weren't enough, Kathy even sang and played the guitar for her own enjoyment.

Not long before becoming ill, Kathy found within herself a strong religious faith, a faith that sustained her in remarkable equanimity through her long, irreversible illness. For those closest to her, Bob Paisley spoke the words in everyone's hearts: "You really had to know her personally to know her extreme dedication to bluegrass and old-time music, and the people and musicians connected with it. No place was too far to travel, no expense too great, to deter her from supporting her beloved music. The support, advice, and great knowledge she gave most freely will be an irreplaceable loss to her great number of friends. Once again, The Maker has seen fit to call one of our greatest figures in the music." —Bill Vernon

A BLUEGRASS HALL OF FAME

by Arthur Menius

"What would the world do without bluegrass music today?" Bill Monroe asked. "Wouldn't states like North Carolina and Kentucky hurt if they didn't have bluegrass music?"

The Father of Bluegrass Music probably expressed the thoughts of many bluegrass fans. Monroe, moreover, has decided to take yet another pioneering step for the music. In late October 1983 he formed a corporation with his son James and purchased four acres of land on scenic Music Valley Drive, about one mile from Opryland near Nashville, Tennessee. An existing building will be expanded and remodeled to house a Bluegrass Hall of Fame.

The hall will induct one or two members every year. "I think the bluegrass people, the entertainers, need that. It would give them something to work for," Monroe said.

The building will also house a bluegrass museum for which Monroe is soliciting memorabilia. A music store will sell records and souvenirs. Monroe hopes that the store can also serve as a meeting place for musicians and fans. This would allow the players, many of whom live in Nashville, to meet their supporters under conditions less hectic than those at festivals.

A walkway will lead up a hillside to a statue of Monroe as he appeared in the early days wearing boots, riding pants, and leather coat.

Monroe hopes that the facility will be ready to open by the first of April or by 1 May 1984 at the latest. "Things are pretty then in Nashville. We'll have a big opening day and I want bluegrass fans from all over the country to come on that day," Monroe said.

Bluegrass on the Air

Gilmer, TX-KHYM-1060 AM. Bluegrass Festival from 12:30 to 1 p.m. with Gene White. Send records to Gene White, KHYM Broadcasting Co., Box 160, Gilmer, TX 75644.

Evansville, IN. WYNG-105 FM. Bluegrass each Saturday 5-7 p.m. with host Doug Nantz. Send records to Doug Nantz, 1036 Pringle St., Henderson, KY 42420.

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