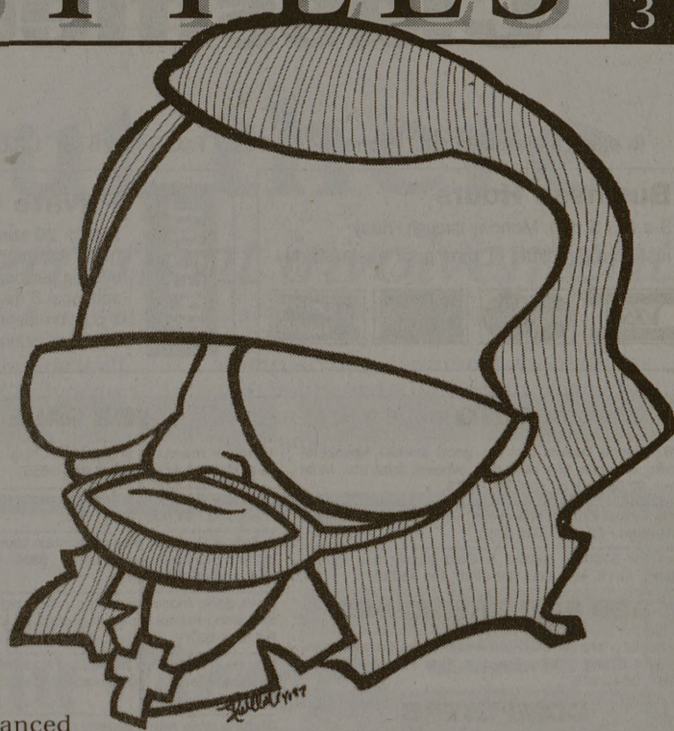


livin' it up

IN LUCKENBACH

Fourth of July Picnic features David Allan Coe and 'the boys' partying Willie-style



By RHONDA REINHART
THE BATTALION

Willie Nelson is well-known for his singing and song-writing, but he also knows how to throw a party.

Texas music and Texas heat helped Nelson present a Texas-style Fourth of July celebration Friday in Luckenbach.

The singer brought his 25th annual festival to the small hill country town for the third year in a row. Artists such as David Allan Coe, Dwight Yoakum, Joe Ely, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Ray Price, Leon Russell and many others joined Willie's "family" for the celebration.

It was hot and dusty, but the flowing beer and blaring music seemed to overcome any discomforts the audience might have experienced.

Jim Yates, general manager of a trucking company in San Antonio, said this was his first visit to one of Nelson's picnics, and it was more than he expected.

"It's worth sitting in the sun for the duration of the concert for the people, the music and the camaraderie," he

said. "There are people from all walks of life here. There are old people, young people, business people, and everybody is enjoying himself."

Yates, who had his hat signed by David Allan Coe, said watching Coe play the old set was the highlight of his day.

"The population here is six, but today it's 30,000, and it's all because of Willie ... Willie is Texas, and we partied in a Willie way."

Joseph Kozusko
University of Texas student

Coe played several of his old hits, including "Willie, Waylon and Me," "If That Ain't Country" and "You Never Even Called Me By My Name." A tattered flag tied to the neck of his guitar was one of the few reminders that the concert was being held to celebrate America's freedom.

The fans were not the only ones who seemed happy to be at the picnic. Jimmie Dale Gilmore thanked

Nelson "for even being alive," and Little Joe y La Familia danced on-stage and encouraged the crowd to start a conga line.

Ady Hernandez, lead singer and guitarist for Dahebebees, said playing at the picnic was a great opportunity for the band.

"It was cool," he said. "We're just really glad Willie let us play. He pretty much hand-picks everybody who plays here."

The Temple musician said this was the fourth of Willie Nelson's Fourth of July Picnics he has attended and plans to come back next year.

Nelson is known as one of the greatest country musicians around, and from the cheers of the crowd, he definitely seemed to be the picnic's main attraction.

Joseph Kozusko, a graduate student at the University of Texas, said Nelson is the only reason he came to Luckenbach Friday.

"The population here is six, but today it's 30,000, and it's all because of Willie," he said. "We thought about going to Kerrville to see Robert Earl Keen, but we chose Willie instead. Willie is Texas, and we partied in a Willie way."

Madison Woo, a junior journalism major at Texas A&M said he came to the festival to see Willie also.

"All the Texas music has been the best part of the picnic," he said. "It's pretty cool. Everyone is in a really good mood."

Nelson held his first Fourth of July Picnic in 1973 outside of Dripping Springs. Since then, the festival has moved to many different locations including College Station and Gonzales, but audience members who came to the show in Luckenbach got a little something extra.

Vel Ann, mayor of Luckenbach, made every member of the crowd an honorary citizen of the town.

"There are some requirements," she said. "As citizens of Luckenbach, you are required to take life easy, enjoy Texas music and be somebody - because everybody's somebody in Luckenbach."

Not only was everybody somebody, but in the spirit of Independence Day, everybody seemed to be doing their own thing. People danced. People sang. People passed out, and people passed joints. Some got drunk, and some got arrested.

But despite the heat, the dust and the crowd, the audience generally remained friendly and well-behaved.

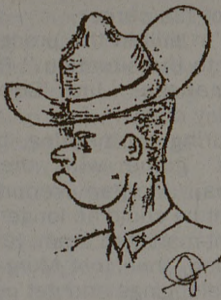
"It's all part of it," Woo said. "It's good fun."

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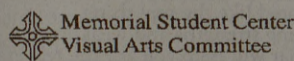
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